

# Transition from Hospital to Home

When a family transitions their infant from the hospital to home and is interested in receiving early intervention and other community services, it is important that they feel comfortable and respected in their communication with the early intervention provider. Sometimes parents may not feel completely comfortable taking care of their new arrival, particularly if the baby was premature or has developmental difficulties or delays. As a parent, you may have concerns about your ability to take care of an infant that is more fragile without the support of hospital personnel. Learning to read your infant's cues and respond effectively builds your ability to promote your new baby's development and attachment. It also builds your own confidence and adjustment as a parent.

[Click to see a video of this Learning Way](#)

Video courtesy of ZERO TO THREE

## Learning Way: Feeling confident and comfortable about reading your infant's cues and learning how to respond to their needs

- Observe your infant's behavior, recognizing it as his or her way of communicating needs and wants.
- Watch your infant's facial expressions and body language. Is the infant quiet, alert and moving his limbs slowly, or even lying still? This is called a quiet-alert state and might be a good time for gentle verbal and physical interaction.
- Look for subtle changes in your baby's facial expressions and body movements. Jerky movements, head turning, or frowning might be signs of becoming upset. Check to see if it's time for a diaper change, time for a feeding, or simply time to shift the baby's position. It could also be a sign the baby doesn't feel well or that needs a break from interaction and being handled. Missing such subtle cues can result in more agitation and crying.
- Experiment with soothing ways you can respond to your infant's signals, cues, or behavior. You can respond with touch, talking, singing, or gazing warmly into the infant's face.
- Realize that it might take some time to learn which responses will be most effective for your infant, while also being aware that he or she may not respond consistently to your efforts.
- Be confident that you will learn what to do to respond to your infant's attempts to communicate. Don't be discouraged when what you try first may not work.
- Allow other friends and family members to help you and support you as you care for the baby. Remember it is good to ask for help or a break when you are tired or frustrated.

### A Quick Peek

Luis and Carla are finally home as a family. Their twin daughters, Lily and Louisa, were born prematurely and spent over a month in the neonatal intensive care unit of the regional hospital. It was a difficult and frightening time for Luis and Carla and their parents, but the girls have been discharged and are doing well. Their attending physician and the hospital social worker talked to them about early intervention services and how important it is to be connected to a supportive program. While the babies are doing well, they are showing some mild delays due to their prematurity.

Lily struggles with some reflux and oral sensitivity, and Louisa becomes agitated and cries easily. At first Luis and Carla were nervous about bringing the twins home because of their size and developmental issues, but the hospital staff worked with them to watch the girl's facial expressions and body movements and practice ways they might respond to the twins. They called it "reading their cues". The early intervention service coordinator, Molly, is very supportive of the new parents' efforts to manage the girls' care and promote their development. She reassures Luis and Carla about how responsive and sensitive they are in caring for their little ones.



### You'll know it's working if ...

- You are able to identify any concerns about caring for and promoting the development of your infant.
- You adapt to the changing developmental needs of your infant and respond confidently to infant cues.
- You are confident about your ability to care for your infant and are open to assistance when you experience difficulty.
- You feel like you are adjusting to new circumstances and feel supported in caring for your infant.

A variety of online resources provide more information about your baby's transition from hospital to home. They include a free learning module from the Virginia EI Learning Center, [An Early Interventionist's Guide to Prematurity](#), and the Zero to Three/Johnson & Johnson Pediatric Institute interactive campaign, [Early Arrival: Finding the Magic of Everyday Moments in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit](#).