



Parent Information Sheet: **Late Preterm Baby**

What is a Late Preterm Baby? You may be surprised that your baby delivered several weeks before your due date. Be reassured that the doctors, nurses, and staff at BWH will help your family get off to a great start. A late preterm baby is an infant born between 35-36 weeks gestation (4-5 weeks early). Being born a few weeks early means that your baby did not have the full pregnancy time to grow and mature.

Areas that will be closely watched and checked frequently:

- **Breathing**
- **Temperature**
- **Feeding**
- **Blood sugar**
- **Jaundice (yellowing of the skin)**
- **Infection**

Breathing: Because a late preterm baby's brain is less mature, he/she may have shallow breaths or skip a breath ("apnea").

Temperature: Late preterm babies have less fat stores than full term babies, so they can get cold or use too many calories trying to stay warm. Some babies will need an incubator until they can keep a steady body temperature on their own. Skin-to-skin also helps to keep your baby warm.

Feeding: Some late preterm babies have a weaker suck and swallow than a full-term baby. They do not always waken for feeds or give cues when hungry. Good feeding is important for growth, normal blood sugar levels, and to prevent jaundice. We will help you to feed your baby and lactation specialists can help if you choose to breastfeed.

Blood sugar: Some late preterm babies can have low blood sugar levels so we always check for this. We can usually treat low blood sugars with a combination of sugar gel and feeding. Spending lots of time skin-to-skin with your baby will also help prevent low blood sugars.

Jaundice: Jaundice is when the skin and whites of the eyes become yellow from a build-up of bilirubin. Bilirubin is processed in the liver and then removed from the body via poop. Late preterm babies have an immature liver, so they have a higher risk of jaundice. Poor feeding can also increase jaundice. A high bilirubin can lead to brain damage, so your baby's jaundice level (bilirubin) will be checked regularly.

Infection: Your baby has an immature immune system which puts him/her at greater risk for infection. Early signs of infection include worsening problems with breathing, feeding, holding a steady body temperature or energy level.

Congratulations on the birth of your baby!



Isolette



Feeding methods



Baby with jaundice receiving phototherapy treatment ("blue light" therapy)

