

# DADS CAN ATTACH TOO!

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Research, along with common sense, tells us how the relationship between a mother and her infant is essential in the child developing a secure sense of him or herself. However, the significance of the relationship between a father and infant is sometimes overlooked. Fathers do play an extremely important role in helping their infant and child to grow up to feel good about who they are, happy about the life they lead, and secure in their belief systems. There is nothing more precious than to watch a father and son playing ball, or a father and daughter hugging or having pretend “tea” together. A relationship that brings joy to both father and child.

When a baby is born premature forming these relationships can become complicated. As a father, you may feel uncomfortable holding your baby because she looks too fragile, or you may want to let her mother hold her first and/or more often. Maybe you feel a strong need to fix what’s gone wrong and can’t relax enough to just be with your baby. These feelings are all normal. It may take some extra effort to find a loving relationship with your preemie, but it is possible.

Gently touching your preemie as often as she will tolerate will let her know you are there for her. Being there is helping to “fix” the situation because your presence is giving her strength. Holding your baby as soon as possible will also help you to overcome any fears, and let you both begin to bond with one another. It may take a few times to feel truly comfortable, but it will be worth it. You can even try “Kangarooing” your preemie. Learn your preemie’s cues by asking her nurse what her face and body movements mean. Your preemie will eventually be able to let you know when she is ready for you to softly talk and interact with her. Understanding a preemie is often more challenging because it is more difficult for her to stay organized and convey her needs, but having her father there for her will only help in beginning her journey through life.