

How important is sleep?

“The importance of sleep for the developing brain is absolutely tantamount. There is almost nothing else that we do other than allowing them to sleep. It makes their brain development be as normal as it can. So, a typical fetus before their born is sleeping almost 24 hours a day. They may have 30 minutes of wakefulness.

“Even though they're moving around, and you may feel like they're awake and moving they typically have almost no wakeful moments or a very small fraction of their time in the womb is a wakeful moment. So, babies who are born prematurely are being exposed to lots of different stimuli and typically have a hard time finding that happy sleeping state.”

So, we try to minimize the amount of time we spend giving them external stimuli, whatever that means, whether that means touching them or measuring things from them. So, we try to get them the most amount of sleep possible. And essentially what I tell parents is you should expect them to sleep all the time, and that as they become more alert when they start be closer within a month or two of their due date, then you might see them wake up some. But for the most part we want them to be asleep almost all the time. So that is ideal for their premature brain growth.”