Late Preterm Infants Need Therapy

What is a late preterm infant?

- The late preterm infant is defined a child born between 34 $^{0/7}$ and 36 $^{6/7}$ weeks gestation.
- Growing evidence states that this population is not as healthy as previously thought. (Ramachandrappa, 2009)
- **Occupational and physical therapists are currently treating these children, but many are not seen until preschool or school age. At risk preterm infants who received intervention experienced improvements in motor performance compared to those without intervention (Lekskulchai, 2001). Earlier referral for intervention is beneficial!**

How is occupational and physical therapy helpful for this population?

- Identify and provide treatment for the common delays seen in late preterm infants as well as during their preschool and school age years
- Provide therapeutic interventions to address developmental delays or difficulties
    - Gross and fine motor delays
        - The risk for developmental delay from birth to 3 years old was 36% higher among late preterm infants compared to their term counterparts in a study including over 161,000 infants (Morse, 2009)
        - A gestational age of 34-36 weeks at birth was the largest contributor to motor delays among 1200 late preterm infants compared to 6300 of their term counterparts at 24 months old (Woythaler, 2011)
    - Coordination difficulties
    - Sensory processing and perceptual difficulties
        - There was a significant difference in sensory and perceptual acuity as measured by the Bayley Skills of Infant Development-II mental scale between late preterm infants and term infants at 12 and 18 months of age (Romeo, 2010)
    - Emotional regulatory problems
    - Long term feeding difficulties
    - Social difficulties
    - Learning and problem solving issues
- Provide family-centered education specific to the child's needs
- Be a community resource to help families seek out additional support as needed

How can you help as the child's primary physician?

- Perform developmental screening at regular intervals (for example *Ages and Stages Questionnaire*)
- **Refer to OT and PT when you notice concerns through your developmental screen or when the parents voice concerns. We will complete a comprehensive OT and/or PT evaluation to provide an in depth evaluation and assessment of the child's motor development.**

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To make a referral, please fax your OT/PT referral to our one-stop referral line: 513-803-1111

The referral form can be downloaded at www.cincinnatichildrens.org/consults