

Parent-Infant Bonding

Positive Indicators of Attachment

Hugs, touches, kisses baby	Holds baby close
Responds to crying with empathy, wants to comfort	Looks at, reaches out to baby
Responds appropriately to baby's cues	Smiles at baby
Dresses and undresses baby, changes diapers	Calls baby by name, pet names
Calls baby affectionate terms	Finds family resemblance in baby
Verbalizes warm comments about the baby	Verbalizes wanting to be near baby
Asks about baby when baby is away from parent	Appears to enjoy caring for baby
Acts as if baby belongs to her/him	Asks partner or visitor if baby is OK
Positive interaction with partner	Positive eye contact with visitor

Comment to both parents when you see them interacting positively with baby and being willing to attend to the baby's needs. New parents love stroking!

Signs of Attachment Disorders

No desire or interest in holding or seeing baby
Holds at extended distance from body or pushes baby away
Lack of concern or no response to infant crying, or always tries feeding
Wanting to leave baby often
Doesn't talk about baby, or calls baby "it," or adult-like talking
Talks about baby's negative characteristics or finds resemblance to disliked person
Improper stimulation, little or no verbal interaction
Voices unhappiness over sex of baby or says baby doesn't look at her/him
Uses unhappy or scolding inflections
Repulsed at breastfeeding, handling diapers, bathing, or spit-up
Not visiting or interacting with baby in NICU
Talks of difficult labor or birth, longer than usual postpartum recovery, or more discomfort
Neglect or abuse, failure to thrive

If you observe any of the above problematic indicators, try talking it through with the parents and observe for changes. If you have concerns about them, refer them to a counselor, especially one who specializes in parent-child relationships. If you suspect, neglect or abuse, make a report to children's services.