

BabyGym[®] - Giving Premies a Head Start

By Kerry Kruise

As a BabyGym Instructor, I have the pleasure of meeting and journeying with different parents and babies. I have also had the privilege of working with babies who arrived a little earlier than expected and have always been amazed at how well these little beings do! I believe that we underestimate the strength and capabilities of premies and that because they are thrown in the deep-end, they learn to fight from early on. They are tough and determined!

Recently, I worked with Blair Dauncey, her mother and Blair's caregiver. It was apparent from the very start just how beneficial BabyGym was going to be for all of them. I observed changes in Kirsten, the mommy, as well as in Blair from the start. Kirsten grew more confident in how she handled Blair and she seemed more determined than ever to continue with the activities at home. Blair grew physically stronger and showed that she was just as capable of performing the activities of the 5-week programme as any other baby and this, in turn, surprised and encouraged her mommy.

Baby Blair was incredibly tiny when she arrived at my door. Her mom had a rather tumultuous pregnancy from around 28 weeks.

Here is her story and feedback regarding her experience from the time she was pregnant until the time she completed the course:

"When a mother is told that there is something wrong in utero, "in utero" literally does a complete 180° and panic station explodes! Not being able to fix a problem with your little 28 week old developing fetus renders an expectant mother helpless and absolutely terrified.

After weeks of bed rest and stress tests in the labor ward, assaulting courses of steroids and my "decision

to buy shares in my gynecologists' practice", our little Blair entered the world at 36 weeks. Having endured a resuscitation, a bombardment of overstimulating sensory input from countless tangling tubes and whirring machinery and seemingly-endless administration of medication, our then 2kg bundle was ready to leave NICU. What ensued were nights of worry due to concerns of sleep apnea, hourly feeds, continuous hiccupping and sneezing and the sickening feeling that I may break her little body when changing nappies no bigger than an average sized napkin.

Having researched how best to go about caring for premies, I realised that the sensory discomfort she endured in hospital caused so much stress and that I would need to adapt my way of handling my baby to reduce the effects of this trauma. I decided to join BabyGym Instructor, Kerry Kruise, in her BabyGym classes. Blair was still very tiny and underweight in terms of her age, which impacted on her strength.



The difference in my child's strength and development was so evident! Within just a short while, her neck strengthened tremendously and her awareness of tactile, visual and audio stimuli was heightened.

The principles of BabyGym really made “sense” to me and were validated in the progress I could see in my child’s co-ordination and control. As a result we are frequent “smellers” of our home grown mint leaves, we have daily jumps on the trampoline and after-bath roly-polies form part of our night time routine.

The information I have learnt through taking part in BabyGym with Kerry is invaluable.

There are reasons for even the smallest and seemingly inconsequential milestones our little miracles reach on a daily basis. Overlooking these achievements or negating the importance of them certainly does not add to the development of our babies. Embracing certain simple techniques by understanding the body’s ingenious way of growing and developing has certainly given me peace of mind in knowing that I have given my special Blair an advantage in a scary start to life!”

