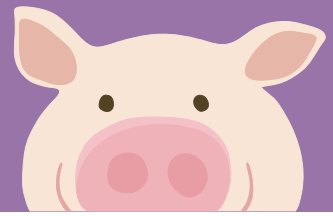


# Parent Handout



## SOFT SPOT (ANTERIOR FONTANEL)

### Why Do Babies Have “Soft Spot”?

Babies have a soft spot (anterior fontanel) on the top front part of the head. This is the most noticeable area where the bones of the skull have not yet joined together, allowing your child’s brain to grow rapidly and to its full size. It is usually a diamond shape, but each baby’s soft spot varies in size, so don’t be alarmed if your child’s soft spot feels too small or too big. Many times you will be able to feel and even see the soft spot pulsating with every heart beat. That is perfectly normal.

### Can I hurt my baby’s brain if I touch the soft spot?

Many parents worry that their baby will be injured if the soft spot is touched or brushed over. The fontanel is covered by a thick, tough membrane which protects the brain. There is absolutely no danger of damaging your baby with normal handling. Don’t be afraid to touch, brush over, or wash over the soft spot.

### When will the soft spot close?

The anterior fontanel usually closes between 12 and 18 months of age. Remember that every child is different, so don’t be alarmed if your child’s soft spot closes a bit early or a bit late.

### When should I worry about the soft spot?

There is usually no need to worry about your baby’s soft spot. However, call your doctor or nurse practitioner immediately if:

- You notice a “sunken in” soft spot (with a visible depression in the baby’s head) — this may be a sign of dehydration.
- You notice the fontanel appears to be bulging or tense — this may be a sign of illness, reflecting pressure in or on the brain.