**Gestational Age Scoring**

Determine the gestational age score as soon as possible after birth, preferably within 12-24 hrs

**Why is gestational age important?**

It is important to know the gestational age of a baby, especially at the limits of viability, so that appropriate care plans can be made.

**Which babies should be scored?**

- low birth weight babies
- post-dates babies
- big babies
- babies with unknown EDD

**What is the Dubowitz / Ballard Score?**

The Ballard score looks at both the neuromuscular and the external/physical features of a baby, each according to six categories. A score is determined for each category, then added to give a final score (twelve categories). This is converted into a gestational age or maturity rate, using a table. (see "Dubowitz/Ballard Scoring for Gestational Age" guideline)

**What is the SPLEN Score?**

The SPLEN score is a convenient and quick method of calculating the gestational age. SPLEN is an acronym for:

- Skin
- Plantar creases
- Labia / Scrotum
- Ear
- Nipples

**Assessment procedure**

The baby is assessed in a warm environment. A paper and a pen are needed to record the scores.

Examine each area using the score chart and calculate the score as indicated in the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of physical maturity</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>Thin, smooth, pink, visible veins</td>
<td>Superficial, few veins visible</td>
<td>Opaque, pale, superficial cracks present</td>
<td>Leathery, deep cracking, wrinkled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantar Creases</td>
<td>Anterior transverse crease only</td>
<td>Creases over anterior 1/3</td>
<td>Creases over anterior 2/3 or whole sole</td>
<td>Creases over whole sole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labia / Scrotum</td>
<td>Clitoris &amp; labia minora prominent Majora unformed</td>
<td>Labia majora &amp; minora equally prominent</td>
<td>Majora are pigmented and cover minora</td>
<td>Deeply pigmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small, smooth, no testes</td>
<td>Few rugae, testes felt high in scrotum</td>
<td>Pigmented, clear rugae, testes in scrotum</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear</td>
<td>Flat, soft cartilage, slow recoil</td>
<td>Well curved pinna, slight curling, steady recoil</td>
<td>Well formed, curled with instant recoil</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nipples</td>
<td>Flat, no bud No breast tissue</td>
<td>Raised areola bud &lt; 1cm</td>
<td>Well formed, tissue &gt; 5cm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add the score for each area and add to give a total score. Add this to 30 to give the gestational age of the baby.

The infant’s birth weight, head circumference and length are recorded in percentile chart, on the assessed gestational line. Then determine whether the infant is small, average or large for gestational age, according to percentile lines.

It is preferable to use the Dubowitz/Ballard score as it gives a more accurate gestational age