

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)



Information for Parents

Welcome to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Your baby has been born early or is unwell and had to come to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Different members of the Neonatal Team will be caring for him/her. These include doctors, advanced nurse practitioners, nurses, midwives and nursery nurses. Your baby may be seen by other members of the team such as radiographers, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, and dieticians. Any member of staff who is caring for your baby will be happy to answer your questions.

Transfer to another unit

We are one of two Neonatal Intensive Care Units within the Southern West Midlands Newborn Network and we care for the smallest and sickest babies in the region. If your baby is not too sick or is getting better there may be occasions where we have to transfer him or her to another Neonatal Unit that provides special rather than intensive care.

If your baby was transferred here after birth or you were transferred here in labour we will transfer your baby back to your referring unit or one near your referring unit as soon as they are well enough although this will of course depend on a cot being available.

Visiting (Being with your baby)

Parents and siblings are welcome to spend time with their baby at any time, day and night

Grandparents wishing to visit are welcome when

accompanied by a parent between 3.00pm and 4.00pm and between 6.30pm and 7.30pm every day

Other visitors over 18 years old are welcome when

accompanied by a parent on Saturdays and Sundays between

Visiting cont/d...

3.00pm and 4.00pm and between 6.30pm and 7.30pm

There should be no more than 3 people (including parents) around the baby's cot / incubator at any time as there is insufficient space and babies need a quiet environment. Remember babies need as much sleep as possible so encourage your family and friends to speak quietly.

The only times the nurses **may** ask you to leave the room are:
During the doctors' ward round.
When the nurses are handing over to each other.
When there is a sterile procedure in progress.
During x-rays.

The reasons we ask you to leave the room are to maintain confidentiality, for your own safety or to prevent infection.

Telephone - Contacting us

You can telephone the Neonatal Unit at any time to find out how your baby is progressing and to let us know when you will be coming to be with your baby so that their cares can be planned around these times.

Please ask other relatives and friends not to telephone as we are not able to provide any information unless you have given specific instructions.

Our direct line is: 0121 627 2686

Contacting you

Please make sure that the nurse caring for your baby has a telephone number where we can contact you at all times and make sure that the telephone is not switched off or unplugged. If your phone does not accept withheld numbers, we will not be able to contact you. Be sure to let us know if you change your telephone number whilst your baby is on the NICU.

Mobile 'phones

Please do not use your mobile phone whilst in the NICU. Mobile phones can sometimes affect specialised equipment. They are also an unnecessary source of noise.

Infection Control

We ask you to wash your hands and apply alcohol gel at the trough when you enter the NICU, and then apply gel again when you enter your baby's room. If you or a member of your family has an infection, please 'phone and ask whether you should visit. Coughs, colds, and particularly diarrhoea and vomiting can cause infection in small babies and spread rapidly. If you have a cold sore please do not come to the NICU until it is fully dry.

Equipment

During the time your baby is cared for on the NICU you will see lots of equipment, not all of this will necessarily be used to help care for your baby. The nurse caring for your baby will explain the equipment being used. Don't be anxious if you hear the monitors alarm. They are set to sound above or below a set limit and sometimes will alarm if your baby moves. A member of staff will check your baby to ensure that all is well.

Feeding your baby

Initially your baby might have intravenous fluids (a drip) because of their size or inability to digest milk.

As soon as possible we will introduce milk feeds. This may be through a feeding tube, in the nose or mouth, into your baby's tummy. This will probably be because they are too small, not strong enough yet or have not developed a coordinated suck and swallowing reflex to allow them to feed from breast or bottle.

Breast milk is best for your baby. One of the many benefits of breast milk is that it is kinder to the digestive system and will protect your baby from some infections. Even if you do not intend to breast feed, your baby will get the benefits of your milk if you express it. This is even more important if your baby is small or sick. We will arrange for you to receive a breast pump to enable you to do this either from here or your referring hospital.

Facilities for Parents

Parents' Lounge - where you can make a drink, heat up a meal, relax and maybe talk to other parents. There is a Parent Information Board outside the lounge with useful notices and information.

Norton Court Parents' Accommodation - offering overnight accommodation for parents whose babies are very sick, have transport difficulties, or live outside Birmingham. Unfortunately we cannot accommodate other relatives in these areas.

There is a Dining Room on the Lower Ground Floor which serves meals and snacks and a WRVS shop in the entrance to the hospital which sells snacks, magazines and a few toiletries.

Car Parking

The Trust does not own the car parks. However, if your baby is very premature and expected to be here for some time please speak to the ward clerk who may be able to negotiate a reduced payment.

Caring for your baby on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

We would like to encourage you to become involved in your baby's care from the moment they are admitted. We understand that you will probably be upset and may find the monitors and equipment frightening, especially if your baby is receiving intensive care. Talk to the nurse caring for your baby and they will support and show you how to care for your baby as you feel ready.

Helping your baby's development

Your baby is on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit because they have been born early or is unwell. Babies continue to develop during their stay, but as all babies are different the rate of development will vary. Your baby's development is affected by gestation at birth, weight, and by how well they are.

After birth your baby has to quickly adjust to their new surroundings, The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is often busy, noisy and bright and that can affect babies' behaviour and development. This can be stressful for you and your baby and it can disturb your baby's sleep. Good quality sleep is particularly important for brain development.

By watching your baby and their reactions to the environment and the care given we can see how to help him/her. Because this is a time when your baby's brain is developing at a very rapid rate it is important that the care your baby is given by you, the doctors and nurses is as developmentally appropriate as possible. Protecting your baby's sleep and brain development by being quiet, keeping lighting levels low and carefully scheduling care and procedures is very important.

There are many things that we do which can help your baby's development:

Protection from light and noise using incubator covers and canopies; being quiet and responding quickly to alarms.

Comfortable and supportive positioning.

Skin to skin contact (Kangaroo care) and breast-feeding.

Positive parental touch.

Minimising and treating pain.

Using a pacifier for comfort and learning feeding skills.

We have lots of information about babies' development and how you can help. There are also regular sessions with staff where you can learn more about developmentally appropriate care and discuss how to help your baby's development. Please talk to the nurse caring for your baby if you would like to know more.

What you need to bring in

All babies will need nappies, nappy sacks, cotton wool and cotton buds. If your baby has dry skin we recommend **olive** or **sunflower oil** only **not** baby oil. Perfumed products are not recommended as babies' skin is very delicate.

If you wish to bring in your own baby clothes please ensure they are clearly labeled with your baby's name, we are unable to accept responsibility if they get lost in the wash.

Photographs/Videos

You are welcome to take as many pictures of your baby as you like. Try to limit how much you use the flash as this may startle your baby. You must not include any of the other babies and if there is a possibility that a member of staff might appear in the picture, you must ask their permission.

Emotional Support for Families

We know it can be very stressful having a preterm or sick baby on the NICU. Why not come along to our parents' support group for a cup of tea and a chat where you can meet other parents who have or have had a baby on the Neonatal Unit?

We also can arrange for you to talk to our Clinical Psychologist about your concerns and worries in confidence.

Going home

As soon as your baby comes is admitted we will start preparing for discharge. We will ensure you are confident caring for your baby and have had the opportunity to bath them before you go home. If you choose to bottle feed we will show you how to make up feeds and sterilise bottles. We will also show you how to give any medicines your baby may need. If your baby has reached 36 weeks, is at least 2 months old and is well, immunisations will be given with your consent.



Before going home your baby will be fully breast or bottle fed. In occasional circumstances your baby may be discharged home tube feeding.

Before you go, the nurse will check that we have the correct discharge address.

Your baby **MUST** be registered with a GP before taking them home.

Some babies may need to come back to the follow-up clinic.

Transitional Care

If you are breastfeeding your baby you may wish to go to the Transitional Care Ward once they are taking two good breastfeeds a day. This is the best way to establish breastfeeding. It is likely to take at least a week and you should be prepared to stay with your baby during this time.

On rare occasions your baby may be briefly transferred to Transitional Care if a cot is needed on NICU.

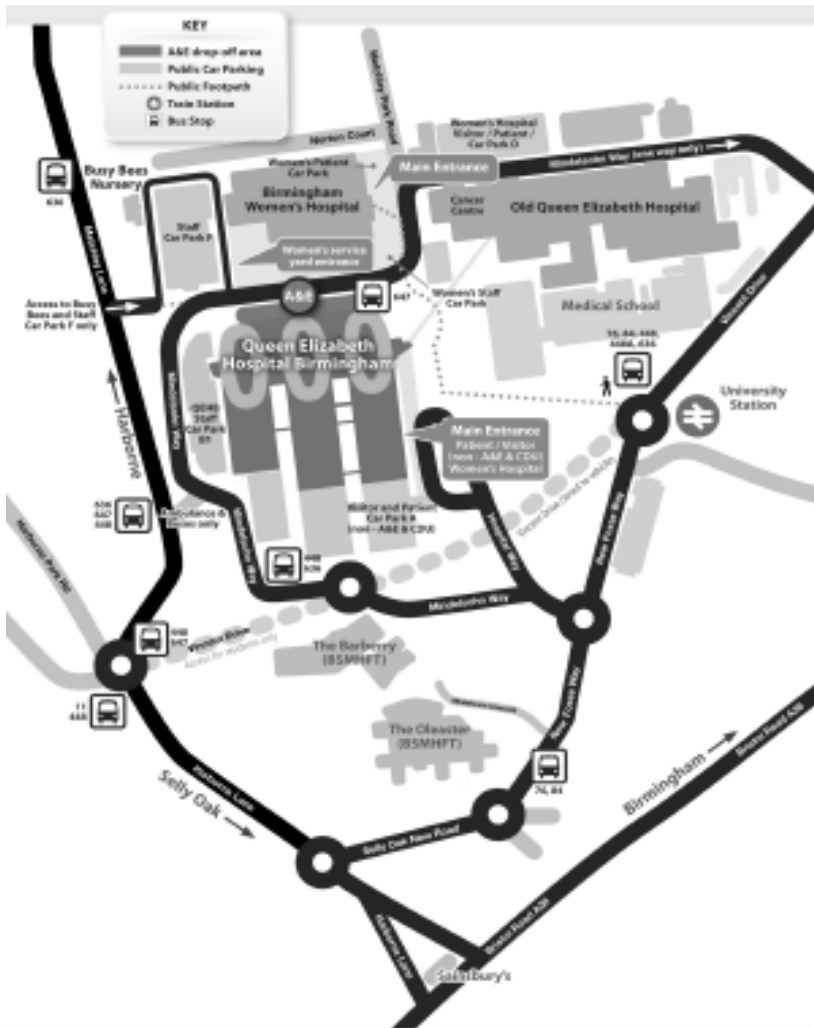
Babies of mothers who have not booked at BWH or live nearer another baby unit

Sometimes babies are transferred from other hospitals because their own hospital is full, specialist treatment is required or there is no facility for preterm babies. Occasionally we may not have a bed on the maternity wards for the baby's mother but as soon as one is available she will be offered it.

When your baby is well enough to be transferred back to the referring or local hospital we will contact them to ensure they have all the information needed to continue your baby's care. Sometimes other hospitals have slightly different procedures and this can take time to adjust to. Be reassured that your baby will receive the best possible care and that we will not transfer them until we are sure that your local hospital has the facilities needed.

Please return the breast pump that you were loaned as these are very expensive and will be needed for other mothers. Your hospital may be able to lend you one. Any breast milk that has been stored will be transferred with your baby.

Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions at all.



Authors:
Jewel Ahumibe - Neonatal Nurse
Michele Emery - Head of Neonatal Nursing

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Birmingham Women's **NHS**
 NHS Foundation Trust

Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TG
 Tel: 0121 472 1377 Fax: 0121 627 2602