

Make sure you enjoy this experience together as a family,  
this is the start of an amazing time for all of you and  
we are here to help every step of the way!



West Hertfordshire  
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# A guide to...

# Preparation for discharge

## *Patient information*



## **Preparation for discharge**

Preparation for taking your baby home starts as soon as you are admitted to the neonatal unit. Without realising it, you are gaining valuable skills and carrying out day-to-day tasks to ensure you are happy and confident on the day you take your baby home.

Initially it all seems a bit daunting and you may feel that the nurses do a lot for your baby, especially if they are very premature or unwell. The staff will ensure you are involved in all aspects of your baby's care and will help you learn important skills like changing nappies, washing your baby (top and tail), having precious cuddles and skin-to-skin (kangaroo care).

When your baby is ready we will support you with feeding. All of this will help to empower you as parents.

As time goes on you will carry out your baby's daily routine in your own way, this is why it is important to spend as much time with your baby on the unit as possible to ensure you are happy and confident.

Attending morning ward round gives you an opportunity to meet with the doctors and discuss how your baby is progressing. This will also prepare you for rooming in and your baby's discharge home.

As your baby gets closer to the day of discharge we will discuss all you have learned so far and ensure you have all the information you need.

## **Parent craft**

During your time on the unit we will discuss parent craft. You can either attend a group session with our community team or the nurses looking after you will teach you.

In these sessions we discuss keeping your baby safe at home, safe sleeping, basic life support, bathing, breastfeeding, making up feeds, sterilising and storing breast milk and formula.

We will teach you how to administer and store any medications your baby may need and inform you of how to continue this at home via a repeat prescription, this will also be required for any specialist milk.

We will discuss your feeding preference when you arrive on the unit and support you with this throughout, if you choose to bottle feed your baby, we ask that you provide your own bottle as soon as possible so we can establish this prior to home.

## **Breast feeding**

If you are breastfeeding – our goal before you go home is for you to feel happy and confident in recognising successful breastfeeds for your baby. You can then build on this success once you are home.

Not all babies are able to fully breastfeed when they are discharged home. This is often related to their prematurity as they can tire easily and will still be perfecting the technique. However, perseverance, offering the breast at all feeds and providing skin-to-skin (kangaroo care) will all help.

Please return your pump if you have loaned one from SCBU, prior to rooming in. You may need to continue expressing once you are home, if so, there is information in the expressing room with regard to the loaning of pumps.

Please take any frozen/fresh breast milk home with you. Bring in a cool bag and some ice-packs to keep it frozen on your journey home. Once home, your breast milk can stay frozen for up to 6 months in a freezer. Fresh breast milk can be kept in the fridge for up to five days.

You can always take a photocopy of your 'breastfeeding diary' home with you to continue to use until you feel confident.

As your baby begins to feed better at the breast, reduce top ups and start reducing your post feed expressing. This may take several days to achieve. If you have any concerns, you may find help and advice from community support groups, your health visitor or GP.