

Info-sheet for Parents

Caring for your baby in the neonatal unit

Caring for your baby in the neonatal unit can be overwhelming. It is normal to feel concerned about how to manage wires and tubes, knowing when to touch your baby or how to offer comfort. You are the most important person to your baby they recognise your voice and smell and you can offer them support and reassurance. This info-sheet provides several ideas of how you can care for your baby in the neonatal unit.

<p>Parental voice and singing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your baby is unwell and not able to be cuddled using your voice by reading or singing can help let them know you are nearby • Singing during kangaroo care (skin to skin) has been found to reduce baby's heart rates helping to stress levels • Early reading for babies helps to develop language and writing skills when they are older
<p>Touch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touch is very important for babies it helps them to learn about what is around them • For some babies if they are unwell touch can be too stimulating • Try resting your hands on your baby and check their response • Use firm touch strokes not light touch
<p>Supportive holding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing your hands on your baby's feet or belly can help them feel like they are back in their mother's belly before birth • Place your hand on the bottom of their feet and let them gently push against you
<p>Mouth care with breast milk & scent pads</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some babies are unable to feed • Using expressed breast milk for mouth care provides them with a nice taste and the immune benefits of human milk • Scent pads can be used to help a baby feel like their mother is nearby • Ask one of the staff about mouth care and scent pads

Feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For babies unable to feed offering them the taste of milk on a dummy can help them to have pleasant taste and practice sucking • If your baby is being fed by a tube into their tummy you can offer them a taste of milk and the dummy to suck on at the time of the feed • Holding your baby during tube feeds is also useful • Ask staff to show you how your baby is being fed
Kangaroo Care/Skin to skin or cuddles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kangaroo care or skin to skin helps babies to grow, it decreases their heart and breathing rates and they also sleep for longer • At least one hour a day of skin to skin is beneficial • When babies are very unwell we need to check with medical staff before offering skin to skin or cuddles • We have comfy chairs and screens for when you cuddle your baby
Nappy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our staff can help you when first changing a nappy • We try not to lift the baby's legs up too high and some babies prefer their nappy to be changed when laying on their side • All care giving should be slowed down and based on your baby's responses, if they become overwhelmed you may need to pause before continuing
Probe changes and temperature measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can assist with moving some of the probes (wires) that monitor your baby's vital signs. Nursing staff will demonstrate how to move them • When moving probes on baby's feet you may need to take extra time as baby's feet can be very sensitive • We measure baby's temperatures regularly and our staff can show you how to do this
Baths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babies do not require a bath every day in the first few weeks after birth • Babies prefer to be immersed in water rather than a sponge bath however this is not always possible • If your baby does not enjoy a bath swaddling/wrapping them may help • It is important for parents to bathe their babies, tell us a time that works for you, so staff can help make sure this happens
Dressing your baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not always possible to dress babies as we may need to monitor them closely • We use equipment (i.e. special beds) to keep them warm • When your baby cannot be dressed you may be able to bring in a hat or a special wrap for them

- Your baby's needs will change over time and this list may not cover all the care
- Our goal is to work with you in caring for your baby if you have any questions please let us know