

# Having a brother or sister in the Neonatal Unit (NNU)

## What is the Neonatal Unit?

The Neonatal Unit (also called NNU) is a special ward in hospital that looks after new babies who need a bit of extra help after they are born.

We have one room called Intensive Care and when babies get a bit better they go to other rooms called High Dependency and Nurseries. Instead of cots, babies often sleep in a warm box called an incubator.

## Why do babies go to Neonatal Unit?

Babies born a bit early or who are unwell go to the unit. Sometimes they may need a bit of extra help with breathing, feeding and keeping warm.

## When can I visit?

You can come and see your new brother or sister at any time, as long as you are with your parents. We ask you to take your coat off and wash your hands when you come into the nursery, to stop any germs passing to the babies.

We try and keep the rooms quiet so the babies can sleep, so try to be as quiet as possible when you visit.

## What does the NNU do to help?

**Breathing:** Sometimes babies can't breathe very well for themselves and special machines in the NNU can help by giving them extra oxygen through their nose or mouth.

**Feeding:** New babies can sometimes have trouble with feeding, so we help by giving them milk through a tube which goes into their nose and down into their tummy. This doesn't hurt them and usually they don't even notice it is there!

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## Patient Information

**Infection:** New babies can catch germs which make them unwell and get an infection, so we give them medicines known as antibiotics to get rid of bugs. The best way to give these is with a tiny tube put into their hand or foot.

**Temperature:** Sometimes babies find it hard to stay warm, so we put them into a warm cot. When they come out for cuddles, they have to be well wrapped up to keep them really warm.

**Light treatment:** Babies sometimes get a problem with their blood which makes their skin go a bit yellow, called jaundice. To help them, we put bright blue lights over their incubator and give the babies sunglasses!

## How long will my brother or sister stay in NNU?

It is hard to know how much time your baby will spend in NNU, as all babies are different.

## What can I do to help my brother or sister while they are in hospital?

At the beginning, the nurses and your parents will do most of the caring for your baby, but when they get a bit better you can learn how to change their nappy or how to help feed them. Babies like a quiet room to help them sleep and grow, so you can help your brother or sister by being very quiet when you are in the unit. You can bring in cards, pictures and toys to decorate the area around their incubator. If you want to have a cuddle with your new brother or sister, just ask one of the nurses; gentle touching is good for your baby.

## What can I do if I have a question?

The doctors and nurses looking after your baby will always help you and answer any questions you have.

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**Drip stands:**

These metal hooks are used to hang bags of fluid or medicine to be given to the baby. The fluid goes into them through a straw in their arm, called a cannula.

**Plugs:**

This is where all the machines are plugged into the wall. Don't pull anything out or the machines will stop working!

**Pumps:**

These help the liquid go from the bags into the baby. These can make lots of beeping noises.

**Ventilator:**

This helps the baby breathe when they can't do it for themselves with a tube in their mouth.



**Monitor:**

This screen shows the baby's heart rate, breathing and levels of oxygen. These are measured using little wires which are stuck on the baby's chest, hand, foot or they use bracelets around their wrist or ankle.

**Table:**

Sometimes there is a table at the end of the cot for nurses to write notes or where you can keep cards, photos and toys for your new brother or sister.

**Incubator:**

This is a heated cot for the baby to sleep in. You can put your hands inside the cot by using the holes on the sides. The screen on the front controls the temperature.

## Making a choice

### Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



### Ask 3 Questions

**To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.**

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

\* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>