



10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE TAKING YOUR BABY HOME

A practical guide to help you feel confident,
prepared and supported as you settle into life
at home with your baby



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hi, I'm Sofia.

I'm a neonatal nurse with over 8 years of experience caring for premature and sick newborns and supporting their families through some of the most challenging and emotional moments of parenthood.

I'm also a mum, so I understand that caring for a baby doesn't stop when you leave the hospital. It comes with questions, worries, and a lot of learning along the way.

I created The Neonatal Nurse Mum to provide evidence-based, easy-to-understand information that helps parents feel more confident and supported from the neonatal unit to life at home.

I hope these guides offer reassurance, practical advice and the confidence to enjoy this special journey with your little one.

With care,

The Neonatal Nurse Mum

LET'S START HERE!

Taking your baby home from the neonatal unit is a huge milestone. It can feel exciting, emotional and sometimes a little overwhelming. This guide brings together 10 important things to know before discharge, helping you feel more prepared and confident for those first days at home.



BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE UNIT

Before discharge, make sure you understand your baby's feeding plan, medications if needed, follow-up appointments, safe sleep guidance and who to contact if you have any concerns. There is no such thing as a silly question — this is your opportunity to ask your neonatal team anything you are unsure about.

*Confidence doesn't come from having all the answers,
it comes from knowing where to find them.*

1. FEEDING YOUR BABY

Feeding is one of the biggest concerns for parents after discharge. Whether your baby is breastfed, fed expressed breast milk, formula-fed, tube-fed, or a combination of these, having a clear feeding plan will help you feel more confident at home.

BREASTFEEDING

- Feed responsively by watching your baby's feeding cues.
- Ask for support if feeding becomes painful or difficult.
- Keep track of wet and dirty nappies.
- Contact your healthcare team if you're worried your baby isn't feeding well.
- If your baby tires easily after feeds, contact your neonatal team for advice.

BOTTLE FEEDING

FORMULA OR EXPRESSED BREAST MILK

- Prepare formula safely according to current guidance.
- Pace feeds if recommended by your neonatal team.
- Never force your baby to finish a bottle.
- Know the signs that your baby has had enough.
- Some babies may be discharged home on fortified breast milk or a specialist formula. Always prepare feeds as advised by your neonatal team.



**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

Babies often feed more frequently during growth spurts. This is normal and it doesn't necessarily mean they aren't getting enough milk.

2. SAFE SLEEP

A safe sleep environment helps reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Before taking your baby home, learn how to create a safe sleep environment for every sleep, day and night.

SAFE SLEEP CHECKLIST

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep.
- Use a firm, flat mattress in a cot or Moses basket/ Next-to-me
- Keep the cot clear of pillows, duvets, cot bumpers, soft toys and loose blankets.
- Keep your baby's head and face uncovered and avoid overheating.
- Share a room, not a bed. Your baby should sleep in the same room as you for the first six months whenever possible.



FOR NEONATAL BABIES

- ☆ Follow the sleep position recommended by your neonatal team before discharge.
- ☆ Always follow your baby's individual discharge plan and sleep advice.
- ☆ If your baby has reflux, continue to follow safe sleep guidance.
- ☆ Never raise or incline the mattress unless specifically instructed.
- ☆ Premature babies often tire more easily. If your baby falls asleep during a feed, gently move them to their cot or Moses basket to complete their sleep safely.
- ☆ If your baby is discharged home with oxygen or monitoring equipment, your neonatal team will show you how to position the tubing safely and create a safe sleeping environment.



Some babies are nursed on their tummy in the neonatal unit because of their medical condition. Before going home, they are usually transitioned to sleeping on their back, as this is the safest sleeping position for babies at home.

3. MEDICATIONS

Some babies leave the neonatal unit with medications, vitamins or supplements to support their health. Before going home, it's important that you feel confident giving each medication safely and know when to ask for advice.



BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Know what each medicine is for.
- Understand the dose and when to give it.
- Practise using the oral syringe with your neonatal team.
- Know who to contact if you have questions.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your baby's medications, especially if they are taking more than one.

AT HOME

- Give medicines exactly as prescribed.
- Never use a kitchen teaspoon to measure medicine.
- If your baby spits out or vomits a dose, do not give another dose unless advised by your neonatal team or pharmacist.
- Store medicines safely and check expiry dates.



**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

Many babies discharged from the neonatal unit go home with vitamins, iron or other medications to support their growth and development. Before discharge, make sure you know what each medicine is for, how to give it correctly and who to contact if you have any questions.

4. RECOGNISING WHEN YOUR BABY IS UNWELL

As a parent, you know your baby better than anyone. While many babies thrive at home after leaving the neonatal unit, it's important to recognise the signs that your baby may be unwell and know when to seek medical advice.

CONTACT YOUR GP OR NEONATAL TEAM IF YOUR BABY:

- Is feeding less than usual.
- Is sleepier than normal or difficult to wake for feeds.
- Has fewer wet nappies than expected.
- Has increasing jaundice (yellow skin or eyes).
- Is not gaining weight as expected.

* IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR BABY, EVEN IF THEY DO NOT HAVE ANY OF THESE SIGNS, SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE *



SEEK URGENT MEDICAL HELP IF YOUR BABY:

- Has difficulty breathing or stops breathing.
- Has blue, pale or mottled skin.
- Has a seizure or becomes floppy and difficult to wake.
- Has a temperature that concerns you (following your hospital's advice for newborns).
- Is difficult to wake or does not respond normally.



**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

Premature and newborn babies can become unwell more quickly than older children. If you are worried about your baby, trust your instincts and seek medical advice promptly.

5. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

No one knows your baby better than you. As you spend time together, you'll learn your baby's cues, routines and unique behaviours. If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and seek advice - you know your baby best.



TRUST YOURSELF ➡➡➡➡➡➡ WHERE TO GET HELP

- You know your baby's usual behaviour.
- Never worry about "bothering" your healthcare professionals.
- Ask questions if you're unsure.
- Keep a list of any concerns to discuss at appointments.

- Your neonatal unit.
- Your GP.
- Your health visitor.
- NHS 111 (if appropriate for your area).
- If your baby is seriously unwell, call 999 immediately.



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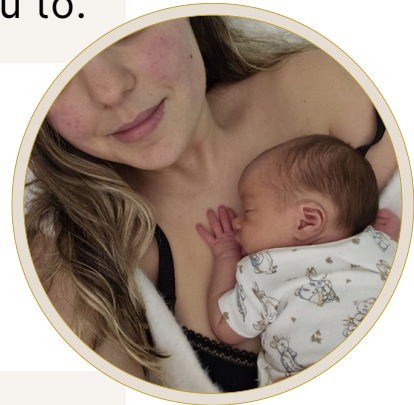
Parents are often the first to notice when something isn't quite right. Your concerns are important - if you're worried, seek advice.

6. FOLLOW-UP CARE & APPOINTMENTS

Leaving the neonatal unit is an exciting milestone, but your baby's care doesn't stop there. Follow-up appointments help monitor your baby's growth, development and overall health, giving you the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns.

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Bring your baby's Red Book and any appointment letters.
- Write down any questions you would like to ask.
- Bring a list of your baby's medications.
- Bring feeding records if your team has asked you to.



DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Your baby's weight, growth and development will be reviewed.
- Feeding and any concerns will be discussed.
- Your baby's care plan may be updated.
- Ask any question you may have - no question is too small.



**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

Many babies who have been cared for on a neonatal unit will have follow-up appointments to monitor their growth and development. These appointments are an important part of your baby's ongoing care.

7. LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Going home is a huge milestone, but it can bring a mixture of emotions. After spending time on the neonatal unit, it's completely normal to feel excited, relieved, nervous or overwhelmed. Looking after yourself matters too. Bringing your baby home can be a big adjustment for the whole family.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME

Confidence may not come straight away. Give yourself time to adjust to caring for your baby at home without the neonatal team nearby.

ACCEPT SUPPORT

Let people help with meals, shopping, housework or other everyday tasks. You don't have to manage everything yourself.

TALK ABOUT HOW YOU'RE FEELING

The emotional impact of a neonatal stay can continue after discharge. Talk to someone you trust, and seek professional support if you need it.



REMEMBER YOUR OWN NEEDS

Eat and drink regularly, rest whenever you reasonably can and make a little time for things that make you feel like yourself.



DID YOU KNOW?

Going home can sometimes feel more daunting than expected. Missing the reassurance of monitors and neonatal staff is common, and confidence often grows gradually as you settle in together.

8. BONDING WITH YOUR BABY

Bonding with your baby doesn't always happen instantly and that's okay. After a neonatal stay, it can take time to adjust to being together at home. Bonding grows through the small, everyday moments you share with your baby.

SKIN-TO-SKIN

Skin-to-skin isn't just for the neonatal unit. If it is safe and comfortable for you and your baby, continuing it at home can be a lovely way to feel close.

ENJOY EVERYDAY MOMENTS

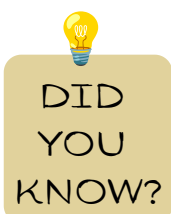
Feeding, cuddling, changing, bathing and simply holding your baby can all be opportunities to spend time together and strengthen your bond.

TALK, SING AND RESPOND

Your baby knows your voice. Talking, singing and responding to their sounds and cues are simple ways to build connection.

GO AT YOUR OWN PACE

There is no "right" way to feel after bringing your baby home. Give yourself and your baby time to settle into your new life together.



Bonding isn't one single moment. It develops through repeated, loving interactions between you and your baby.

9. IMPORTANT CONTACT & RESOURCES

Before you leave the neonatal unit, make sure you know who to contact if you have questions or concerns once you are home. Keep important numbers somewhere easy to find — you never need to feel that you have to manage alone.

NEONATAL TEAM

For questions or concerns following discharge.

 Contact: _____

COMMUNITY TEAM

For ongoing neonatal support and follow-up at home, if applicable.

 Contact: _____

GP & HEALTH VISITOR

For support with your baby's health, development and your family's wellbeing.

 GP: _____

 Health visitor: _____

INFANT FEEDING SUPPORT

For breastfeeding, expressing, bottle feeding or other feeding support.

 Contact: _____

NEED URGENT HELP?

NHS 111 — For urgent medical advice when you're unsure what to do.

999 — If your baby is seriously unwell or there is a life-threatening emergency.



**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

It can help to save important neonatal and community contact numbers in your phone before you leave hospital.

10. TRUST YOURSELF

Bringing your baby home is a moment you may have been waiting for, but it can also feel overwhelming. You don't need to have everything figured out from the first day.

You have spent time getting to know your baby - their little sounds, their cues, what comforts them and when something doesn't seem quite right. Trust that knowledge.

Take each day as it comes, ask for help when you need it, and remember that confidence grows with time.

You know your baby in a way no one else does.

The neonatal team may no longer be just a few steps away, but you are not alone. Keep asking questions, keep trusting your instincts and give yourself time to settle into life at home together.

With care,

The Neonatal Nurse Mum

