



Going Home – A Parent’s Checklist

The day you have been waiting for will arrive before you know it. Your baby has had a wonderful team of professionals caring for him/her in the NICU, and soon you will be solely responsible for your baby’s care. This can be an overwhelming thought. What can you do to prepare for your baby’s homecoming?

- Review your notes from your journal and ask your doctor about follow-ups regarding medications given or procedures administered.
- Find out who will be assigned to your family to help coordinate necessary follow-up appointments.
- Find out if it is permitted to contact the NICU or step-down nurse regarding questions about general care for your baby.
- Ask your team about what is considered normal development for your baby.
- Ask about necessary immunizations before leaving the hospital.
- Make sure your team reviews all illnesses your baby may be at-risk for, such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and learn how to prevent and detect signs of illness.
- Make sure your baby sleeps on his/her back (unless another position is medically indicated) to reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and talk to your team about “tummy time.” For more information about preventing SIDS, visit www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/
- Find out about necessary vitamins and learn how to feed your baby, whether by bottle or breast. Also, find out how much your baby should drink each feeding and how often you should feed your baby.
- If your baby requires medication, note the name, find out if a generic version exists and can be substituted. Also learn the exact purpose of all medications.
- Get instructions on medication administration, dosage and side effects, missed doses, effectiveness, and circumstances when to call the doctor before administering medication. Practice giving the medication in the hospital.
- Learn how to take your baby’s temperature.
- If possible, ask your pediatrician to visit your baby while in the NICU and coordinate your baby’s first checkup.

- If you plan to have your baby circumcised, find out if the procedure should be done prior to discharge and by whom.
- If one of your babies goes home before the other(s), ask if you are allowed to bring him/her back to the NICU when visiting your other babies.
- If your baby is going home with additional support, such as an apnea monitor or oxygen, learn the proper use of the equipment as well as who and when to call if problems arise.
- If your baby is going home with additional support, contact your fire department, emergency medical service, and the local utilities. In case of a power outage, these services will be aware that your neighborhood should be considered a priority when fixing utility problems.
- Make sure everyone involved in caring for your baby is trained in infant CPR.
- Register with the hospital's high-risk clinic, follow-up or local early intervention program and see how frequently you should have your baby assessed.
- Obtain any special supplies needed, such as preemie diapers or preemie nipples, and find out where to purchase preemie clothing.
- Start caring for your child while still in the NICU – bathing, dressing, changing diapers and doing special procedures. Such preparations will make you feel confident about doing these tasks alone at home.
- Make sure everyone in your home is instructed on proper hand washing. Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of illnesses.
- Obtain proper car seats or car beds for each baby and find out if the NICU staff tests for apnea or bradycardia while the baby is in the car seat. Learn how to use the car seat by reading the manual before you take the baby home. For more information on car seat safety, visit www.app.org/family/carseatguide.htm
- Ask your team how much stimulation is recommended for your baby and what signs to detect if your baby is over-stimulated, tired or hungry. Get to know your baby's personality, his/her likes and dislikes, and how to respond.
- Ask if a limited number of visitors are allowed into your home, what precautions they should take, and the circumstances when no one should visit.
- Find out how soon you can take your baby out in public.
- Ask your team what precautions to take if someone in your home or a visitor to your home is a smoker.