

Patient information

Staying at West Suffolk Hospital Neonatal Unit

Your feelings as parents/ care giver whilst your baby's on the Neonatal Unit

- It is normal to have lots of different feelings in the days and weeks following your baby's birth and their receiving special care. These could include feeling overwhelmed, sad, relieved, happy or shocked.



- Our thoughts, feelings and behaviour are all linked and influence each other. This means if we are feeling relaxed, we may have positive or calming thoughts and this will affect how we act. However, if we are feeling down, we may experience more negative thoughts and may withdraw from friends, our families or activities.
- It can take time to come to terms with your baby being in the Neonatal Unit, however most people find things start to get easier as time goes on.

Getting to know your baby

It can be a stressful experience if your baby is poorly or born early. You may not have felt prepared for your baby to arrive and it may be difficult to see your baby unwell and to not provide all of their care.

This can make it difficult to bond with your baby straight away and it is normal to feel like this. However, you are the most important person in your baby's care and there are things you can do to get to know your baby and comfort them before and after procedures:

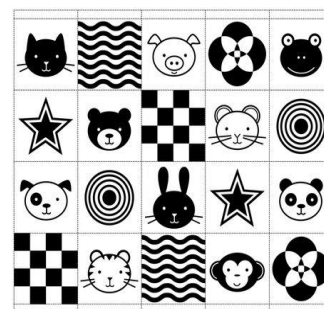
- You may like to try **Kangaroo care**, by keeping baby in skin-to-skin contact with the mother's or father's chest. This helps your baby stay warm, can help you and your baby to bond with each other and helps them to grow.
- You may like to try **containment holding** with your baby. This is done by placing one hand around your baby's head and the other around their bottom or back and holding the position still. While you are doing this, you may quietly talk or sing to your baby.



Activities your baby might enjoy

Interacting with your baby is really important for their development. Here are some things you might like to try during their alert periods:

- One of the first senses to develop in the womb is **hearing**. Your baby may enjoy listening to sounds and music. Alternatively, you might like to talk to them, read them a story or sing them a song. Your baby may be able to recognise your voice from the womb and might find this soothing.
- Your baby may have developed sensitivity to light and may move their head towards **continuous light**. You may like to try using our sensory lights and toys.
- Your baby may like to look at contrasting patterns. This is because black and white are the first colours they can see. You may like to use our **visual stimulation cards** and show these to your baby for short periods of time.
- Babies like looking at **faces**. You may like to play peek-a-boo with them or bring in photos of your family and friends to show them.



Please ask a member of the team to show you the developmental care cupboard.

Relaxation tips

Although you may want to spend lots of time with your new baby, and this is a very busy time for you, it is also important to take time for yourself. Ways that you might like to relax include:



- Writing a journal can be a helpful way to express your thoughts and feelings.
- You may like to try a breathing exercise to help you feel relaxed. Try breathing in through your nose for **four** seconds, holding your breath for **seven** seconds, then breathing out through your mouth for **eight** seconds.
- Meditation can be a great way to get some mental space. There are lots of good apps such as Headspace, or free videos on YouTube.
- It may be helpful to spend time with your family and friends. This may be to do something fun, or to talk about how you are feeling.

Where to get support

You may find that you would like some more support and that is ok. Some good people to speak to may include:

- Your **GP**
- Your **health visitor**
- The local **Children's Centres**
- The **Wellbeing Suffolk Service** offer psychological therapies and support and you can self-refer by phone or online.
- Come along to our **Neonatal Family Support Troop** (please ask for more information on this).
- Our psychology team here can support you with managing difficult thoughts and feelings. This team, are based within the West Suffolk Hospital. They can be contacted by the NNU staff/doctors to arrange to come and chat with you.