

Tips for Grandparents supporting parents with a baby in the NICU



Your precious grandchild has arrived and requires special care in a neonatal unit.

Of course you're worried for the baby's health, but you're also concerned for the parents and how they'll cope with the journey ahead of them. It's natural to want to ease your child's pain and anxiety but it's your ongoing love and support that will make the most difference.

Here are some ideas for how you can express that love and support in a way that will benefit the parents.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT MIGHT INCLUDE...

- Acknowledging the baby's birth – sending flowers or gifting a diary to record milestones.
- Offering to notify people of the baby's birth and passing on other information and updates.
- Offering to drive parents to and from the hospital and providing meals or snacks.
- Spending quality time with any siblings – this can help them feel as important as the baby.
- Visiting your grandchild when the parents aren't able with the parents consent.
- Keeping in regular contact if you live far away.
- Updating your whooping cough vaccine before visiting the baby and staying away if unwell.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT MIGHT INCLUDE...

- Complimenting the baby at each visit – focusing on family resemblances and their fighting spirit.
- Telling the parents what a good job they're doing and how you admire their strength, dedication and parenting skills.
- Listening to the parents' fears and concerns.
- Reassuring the parents – it's common for them to feel guilty or responsible for their baby's condition.
- Avoiding being critical of your grandchild's care in the hospital – babies in the neonatal unit are sometimes handled differently to full-term babies.

BE STRONG FOR YOUR CHILD

Above all, our best advice is to always be guided by the parents. Sometimes what you think is helpful may not be, so take the lead from them. Don't expect praise or thanks – your child might be in a state of shock or be too overwhelmed to even notice all your efforts.

Finally, recognise that you too may need support so seek help if required. It is likely your child won't have the emotional capacity to look after you. This is the time for you to be strong for your child.



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