

Tips for navigating the NICU and Special Care



With many of our team having gone through the birth of a premature or sick baby, we understand how stressful and traumatic it can be for parents when their baby requires care in the NICU or SCN.

With so much uncertainty, it is normal to feel overwhelmed alongside a range of other emotions. That's why we've collated these tips to help you during your time in the NICU and SCN.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU COPE:

- Ask staff to keep you informed about your baby's condition and treatment plan, but also give yourself permission to take breaks from constant monitoring to prevent overwhelm.
- Write about your experience, reflecting on your journey so far. This can help you process your emotions during this challenging time.
- Talk to family, friends, social workers or a qualified mental health specialist. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can provide comfort, support and valuable insights and help you manage your feelings.
- Connect with other parents in the unit for additional emotional support and understanding.
- Try to maintain some type of routine.
- Make time to get enough sleep and rest.
- Try to maintain regular exercise and eat a balanced diet.
- Celebrate the firsts including the first touch, hold, nappy change, feed, coming off breathing support and getting tubes removed.



TRY TO REMEMBER TO:

- Accept that you or your partner may be experiencing different emotions.
- Make time for self-care to recharge and reduce stress.
- Share your thoughts, fears and feelings with others.
- Avoid conflict and recognise you are both going through a difficult time.
- Acknowledge that the situation is not your fault and no one is to blame.
- Listen to your partner without judgement.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN CARING FOR YOUR BABY:

- Read stories and sing to your baby - they know your voice and will be soothed by it whilst also providing you with an opportunity to bond with your baby.
- Talk to the nurses about having kangaroo cuddles with your baby if they are stable.
- If your hospital allows, engage in family centred care which includes helping to change nappies, tubes and preparing for feeds.
- Educate yourself on your baby's situation so you feel empowered to help in caring for your baby.

YOU MAY FIND BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Anger and hostility
- Mood swings and restlessness
- Detachment and isolation
- Scattered and irrational thought processes
- Physical symptoms such as tightness in the chest, nausea, muscular and joint pains, night sweats, headaches, shortness of breath and/or a racing pulse.

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