



Home Tips



Hiccups and bumps you might encounter
in your first few weeks at home and
where to look for support

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Creating a Safe Sleep Environment for your Baby

After leaving hospital, some parents feel worried about their baby's sleep safety.

There are plenty of steps you can take to keep your baby safe.

Helpful resources include:



Basis



Lullaby Trust



UNICEF

Remember, the safest place for your baby to sleep is on their back in a clear sleep space.



Your baby should sleep in their own cot/crib in the same room as you for the first 6-months at home.

Use a firm mattress and ensure your baby's head is uncovered, tuck the blanket to the shoulders.

Your baby's feet should be at the bottom end of the cot.

Keep your room temperature between 16-20 degrees.

Sleep

Car seats are designed to keep babies safe while travelling, not as a main sleeping space.

Ensure your baby has a smoke free environment at home and while travelling.

The Lullaby Trust has useful information about car seat safety. You can access it here:



Lullaby Trust

Responsive Feeding

Feeding your baby responsively can help develop loving parent-infant relationships. Feeds are for love, comfort, reassurance and nutrition.

Hold your baby close during feeds and learn to recognise their feeding cues (such as your baby putting their hands to their mouth and turning their head to the breast or bottle).

Guidance on feeding can be found as part of UNICEF's Baby Friendly Resources here:



Breastfeeding

Even if you have been breastfeeding your baby while in hospital, you may feel it's different when you get home. Things may seem tricky at first, without support close by.

If you are unsure, worried or feel that you need some support, talk to someone. There are a number of professionals and services available to help you with feeding.

Your midwife or health visitor will know of local contacts.



Helpful breastfeeding resources include:

HealthWorks



Common Breastfeeding Challenges

If feeding becomes painful, you may need to check your baby's latch. Ask your health visitor or feeding support team for help and advice.

Hardened area or lump

If you find a tender swelling in your breast or have some pain whilst breastfeeding, you may have a narrowed, inflamed duct. Try feeding your baby as often as possible which may help to increase the milk flow.

Gentle touch, cool packs and anti-inflammatory medication may help (if they are suitable for you to take).

Expressing by hand may also help.

Mastitis

Mastitis is when your breast becomes swollen, hot and painful. If you find a swollen lump that is painful and/or hot to touch and you have 'flu like' aches or a temperature, you may have mastitis.

Continue to breastfeed, as milk flow will help to clear the blockage. If it is too painful, try gentle expressing instead. Try to rest, drink lots of fluids, try a cool pack on the area to reduce the swelling.

Anti-inflammatory medication may help (if they are suitable for you to take).

If you believe you may have Mastitis, you should contact your GP as soon as possible.



Mastitis NHS

Tums & Bums

There are a number of professionals and services available to help with poo and tummies.



Your midwife, health visitor or GP will be able to help.

Common Worries

Constipation

Constipation is common.

You can help your baby by gently bending their knees (one at a time) towards their tummy to help them move their bowels.

If this does not help, talk to your health visitor or GP, as they may prescribe a medicine to help.

Reflux

Gastro-oesophageal reflux, known as 'reflux' is when some of the food contents of your baby's stomach come back up into the food pipe or mouth.

It is common - especially amongst those born prematurely.

Reflux may cause your baby to be unsettled, bring up small amounts of milk after feeding and some babies may be unsettled when trying to go to sleep.

Keeping your baby upright for a short time after feeding may help.

If you are concerned about your baby's reflux or if they are not gaining weight, please see your GP.

Colic

Colic refers to frequent episodes of prolonged crying in a baby who seems otherwise healthy.

No-one really knows what causes colic, but it might be related to the digestive system.

Colic usually resolves after three or four months but it can be hard for you if your baby is crying a lot. You could try supporting your baby in an upright position or give your baby a warm bath.

If you are concerned about your baby, or are finding it hard to cope, contact your health visitor or GP.



Colic
NHS

Your Baby's Development

There are a number of professionals and services available to help with your baby's development.



Your health visitor is a good first contact and these online resources may also be helpful:



El Smart



Brazelton
Centre UK



Pathways

At home, there will be different sounds, lights and smells compared to the neonatal unit, but you and your baby will gradually get used to being at home together.

For some babies, gentle background noise may help them settle.

If your baby was born early, it is important to think about their developmental abilities from their due date.

Every child will develop in their own unique way.

Your baby will recognise your face, voice and smell.

Spend time together, talk to them, hold them and cuddle them.



In the first few weeks, your baby doesn't need toys, they just need to spend time with you and be close to you.



You and your baby may enjoy skin to skin. There are lots of benefits to skin to skin.

Some people choose to use a sling. If you use a sling, it is important that you follow the T.I.C.K.S rules for safety guidance.



Baby
Sling Safety

Carrying
Matters



Depending on your baby's individual situation, you may be offered follow-up care. It can include a visit at home from a community nurse or health visitor, or a telephone or clinic appointment at your local hospital or the hospital where your baby received their neonatal care.

Remember

All babies learn and develop at their own pace.

Try not to compare your baby to others.

If you have any concerns about your baby's development, don't be afraid to speak to your health visitor or GP.

The Importance of You

At first, being at home with your baby will be a change for you all.



You are the most important person to your baby and they will need you to help them feel safe and loved. You can only do this if you also feel safe and supported, which is why you should reach out if you feel you need help.

The Importance of You



Continue skin to skin care as much as possible.

Let your baby know you're close by.

Looking After Yourself

Having a baby who requires neonatal care can be an unexpected and worrying time for families.

At times it's going to feel difficult, whether you're on the neonatal unit or at home with your baby.

It's common to feel overwhelmed, especially in the first few days and weeks at home.

It's okay to find it hard at times, all new parents feel this way at some stage.

You Matter Too

It's easy to focus on your baby and forget about yourself but it is important that the whole family are happy and healthy.



Many families need support for their own mental health and wellbeing.

You Are Not Alone

Although it can often feel like you're alone, dealing with it all, there are many families going through or who have been through similar experiences as you.



Please speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP about how you are feeling.

You can also self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies:



Talking Therapies NHS

We are here to support you



You can contact the Tiny Lives Team who can put you in touch with counsellors, peer supporters, parents' groups and families who have been through the NICU journey.



Tiny Lives website

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More information about this project and the team involved is shared on the TinyLives HomeTips page here:

