

# Your Baby's Discharge from Newborn Care

Royal Hospital for Women

October 2021

## Is My Baby Ready for Discharge?

One of the first questions parents ask is “when can we take our baby home?” Every baby is different so we can never give an exact date, but it is usually realistic to expect to take your baby home around their due date. However, instead of focusing on the number of days, baby's age or weight as criteria for babies to go home from hospital, we are more focused on your baby's ability to do the following things before being discharged home:

- Temperature Regulation – Before your baby goes home, they must be able to maintain their temperature and have a stable heart rate and breathing while awake, sleeping and being held.
- Feeding – The ultimate goal is your baby being able to feed by mouth / ‘suck feed’. Feeding should be a nurturing experience, providing optimal nutrition for growth and development.
- Sleeping – Your baby should be sleeping on their back, have an emerging routine sleep pattern and be awake more in the day and asleep more at night.
- Positioning – At discharge your baby will be able to maintain a stable heart rate and breathing in a variety of positions.
- Looking, listening & smelling – We want your baby to go home and be able to accept or integrate sensory stimuli for short periods of time while maintaining stability.

Neonatologists will make the final decision about when your baby is ready to be discharged. Discussing with your baby's bedside nurse and attending medical rounds is the best way to understand when this may be.

## Are you Ready?

By being an active participant in your baby's care during their hospitalisation, you will have already learned many skills, perhaps without even realising. Before your baby's discharge we recommend that you ensure you are confident with the below. Do not hesitate to ask your baby's bedside nurse for help or clarification in the run up to your baby's discharge / rooming in.

### Feeding:

- Understand baby's feeding schedule / read baby's feeding cues
- How to breastfeed and troubleshoot breastfeeding challenges
- How to prepare bottle feeds and adjust volume based on baby's weight
- How to sterilise bottles

### Cares:

- How to take baby's temperature at home / gauge whether they are too hot or cold
- How to bath baby at home

- How to weigh baby at home (to ensure baby is growing and to adjust milk and medication volumes according to weight)
- How to perform CPR
- Awareness of the importance of regular weigh-ins with the Child & Family Health Nurse / GP, who will then guide on adjustments to medication.

#### **Sleeping:**

- Confidence with wrapping baby for sleep
- An understanding of how to set up bassinet in compliance with SIDS guidelines

#### **Medication:**

- How to prepare and administer medication
- How to source additional medication / access to scripts
- How to clean and reuse syringes, and purchase replacements

### **CPR Training and Home Safety Session**

Before your baby is discharged, you will be encouraged to attend the NCC's education session on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). This course provides you with some information on what to do if you have an emergency at home, and also covers topics including choking, car seat safety and safe sleeping.

As your baby gets closer to discharge, ask your nurse how to sign up for the next session. Please remember to bring a notepad and pen to take notes. If you are unable to attend the session run in the NCC, it is recommended that you sign up for an independent CPR course. You can research these online or attend the course offered by Health Education at RHW.

### **Rooming In**

The NCC has two rooming in suites, called the Blossom Corner. A suite is a space where both parents can stay overnight (for 1 or 2 nights), and take on the sole care of their baby, with the comfort of knowing a ward full of nurses is just outside the door. We encourage parents to spend at least one night in Blossom Corner to ensure they are comfortable with unassisted feeding, administering medication, complying with SIDs guidelines, etc.

It is necessary to book your Blossom Corner nights, and there is a housekeeping cost associated with your stay. You will need to fill in a form with a member of staff in the NCC, and then pay for your stay at the RHW front desk. Hospital meals are included in the housekeeping cost, but you are welcome to bring your own food, use the Parents Room's microwave and kettle, or order delivery (for collection outside the POW main entrance).

Bring your own personal effects (including laptops, phone chargers, books, etc.) and toiletries for your stay. Towels and linen are provided, however you may wish to bring additional pillows and warm blankets to feel comfortable. You can continue to use disposable nappies from the ward for your baby, but don't forget weather-appropriate clothes for going home. During your stay in Blossom Corner you may like to take your baby (in their pram or crib) down to the on-site cafes, but please remember to tell the nursing staff that your baby is leaving the NCC.

Rooming in is a hugely momentous moment for NCC families, but can be a challenging one.

Remember, the nurses are on hand on the ward should you need any assistance. Your baby may be unsettled by the change of environment, especially the quiet away from the machines beeping. It is

quite normal for this night(s) to be a difficult and sleepless one for the parents. Do not panic! In the quiet environment you will be exposed to a new array of baby noises. These sounds may seem unusual, but the following are very common; grunting, snoring, hiccupping, occasional cries, etc.

## Is Your Home Ready?

Before you make it home, it is essential that you have a properly installed, rear-facing, 5-point harness car seat to take your baby home in. Many NCC babies are still very small when they are discharged, and you may find a newborn car seat insert useful to help your baby feel a bit more snug in their car seat.

To help you prepare for your baby's coming home, we have listed some items you may like to have on hand and others you should avoid using.

### Suggested items:

#### Bedroom:

- Basinet or cot [*NOTE: As part of SIDS guidelines it is recommended that your baby sleeps in your bedroom in a cot or bassinet for at least their first 6 months*]
- Mattress protector for basinet / cot
- Basinet / cot sheets
- New, firm, well-fitting mattress for basinet / cot
- 6 stretchy / muslin wraps for swaddling
- Additional muslins for burping

#### Bath-time:

- Baby bath / padded basin liner
- Face washers
- Cotton towel
- Mild baby soap / shampoo and lotion
- Cotton buds and cotton wool balls
- Nappy cream

#### Out and about:

- Sturdy pram / stroller
- Nappy bag
- Waterproof change mat
- Baby wipes, nappies, soiled nappy disposable bags / nappy bin
- (Pins or snappy nappy if using cloth nappies)
- Blanket for pram
- Sling / baby carrier

#### Clothing:

- 4-7 one-piece jumpsuits
- 6 singlets
- 3-6 stretchy pull-on pants and tops
- Jackets, especially in winter
- 2-3 hats for warmth or sun protection
- A few pairs of socks
- Toweling bibs

### Items NOT recommended:

- Bassinet or cot pillow
- Baby cosmetics
- Cot bumper
- Colic remedies
- Quilt or duvet
- Baby walker
- Bean bags
- Baby bouncer

As a NCC parent there are products on the market that purport to give you extra peace of mind outside the hospital. If your baby is deemed fit for discharge, at home monitoring is NOT something we encourage, unless otherwise discussed with your doctor.

### Follow Up's

- **Re-admission** – Once your baby has been discharged from the NCC they should be able to thrive in your home. However, should you have a health emergency, call 000 or present to the Emergency Department of the Sydney Children's Hospital on High Street in Randwick, or your nearest children's hospital. Any readmission is likely to be to the Children's Hospital, not the NCC.
- **Neonatologist or Pediatrician** – For babies born before 30 weeks gestational age, it is recommended they be followed up by a Neonatologist or a Pediatrician. You may already have a local one that you know and trust, but for those that do not, you will be required to choose one. The Neonatologists at the NCC are also Pediatricians and you may wish to select someone who is already familiar with your baby's history. However, you are also welcome to conduct your own research. If it is important to you, we recommend you enquire about fees, as well as gauging appointment availability/wait times and location, to ensure you select a doctor that fits your circumstances.
- **Growth & Development Clinic** – Babies meeting certain gestation and birth weight criteria will be enrolled with the RHW Growth & Development Clinic, who will engage with parents directly to organise appointments. The Clinic is in RHW L1 Outpatients.
- **Specialists** – As part of your baby's discharge, they may be referred to additional clinics or for ongoing treatment with therapists or specialists. Your baby's medical team will discuss this with you before you leave the NCC.
- **Early Childhood Centres** – As part of your baby's discharge, your family will be "handed over" to your local Early Childhood Health Centre and the Child and Family Health Nurse service. They will contact you. You are able to visit the Centre for optional check-in's, to weigh your baby, attend groups, etc. It is through this practice that you will be assigned a local "New Parents Group", which you can engage with as much/little as you choose.
- **GP** – Your GP will be a place you visit often; they are your first port of call for your baby's non-emergency health concerns and where your baby receives their childhood immunisations. You will be provided with a copy of your baby's Discharge Summary to give to your GP.

Endorsed 21 October 2021. Reviewed by clinicians and consumers in development stage July to August 2021. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this information please send an email to [portal@royalwomen.org.au](mailto:portal@royalwomen.org.au)