

Going Home: A Parent's Checklist



The day you have been waiting for will arrive before you know it. Your baby has had a wonderful team of professionals caring for him/her in the NICU, and soon you will be taking your baby home and solely responsible for his/her care. This can be an overwhelming thought, so what can you do to prepare for your baby's homecoming?

Finalize Medical Concerns While in NICU

- Choose a health care provider for your baby's care following discharge. Before discharge, ask hospital staff for referrals if needed, and when interviewing providers, ask specific questions about their experience and any special care given for a preemie. Ask if your chosen provider can visit your baby while in the NICU.
- If you plan to have your baby boy circumcised, find out if the procedure should be done prior to discharge, and if so when _____ and by whom _____.
- Ask about whether your baby has received any necessary immunizations before leaving the hospital (___ yes ___no) and keep his or her immunization record with your NICU notebook or medical papers folder for safekeeping. Bring this with you upcoming follow-up appointments.
- Find out what follow-up appointments will be necessary and just before your baby is discharged, schedule those and your baby's first visit with the pediatrician. Specifically, ask if there is a developmental follow-up clinic affiliated with your hospital, and if you can schedule the appointment prior to discharge. If the hospital does not have a follow-up clinic, ask who you should call within your community and have that appointment set up prior to leaving the hospital. (Note: Babies born at 34 weeks gestation or earlier should be given an eye exam, so find out if you need to schedule a follow-up for that too.)

Choosing a Provider Notes:

Immunization Notes:

Follow-up Appointment Notes:

- Ask for the results of your baby's hearing screening and if you need to schedule a follow-up visit for your baby (___yes ___no).
- Ask the NICU staff if you can stay in the NICU overnight or "room in" with your baby prior to discharge: (___ yes ___ no).
- Get all of your baby's prescriptions and vitamin recommendations from the doctors and have them filled. (Note: Check if a generic version can be substituted.)
- Finally, request a copy of your baby's discharge summary for your records and be sure to review any/all questions from your NICU journal about the baby's care.
- If you have multiples (twins, triplets, or more) and one of your babies goes home before the other(s), ask if you are allowed to bring him/her back to the NICU when visiting your other babies.

Testing and prescription Notes:

Develop Care Skills

- Ask your team for information about typical developmental milestones for your baby. Locate and learn about your local early intervention program and see how frequently you should have your baby assessed for developmental milestones. See MOST's Developmental Milestone web page www.MOSTonline.org/membersonly/milestones.htm for more information.
- Learn how to feed your baby, whether by bottle or breast. You should know how much your baby should drink at each feeding, how often you should feed your baby, and how to tell if the baby is getting enough. The hospital staff should help you learn how to use a breast pump if needed, and if you plan to nurse at the breast, be sure to ask for help and assistance nursing at least 3 times prior to discharge to help make the transition from pump to breast goes as smooth as possible once home. (Note: For multiples, nurse each baby 3 times at the breast prior to discharge.)
- Ask about the exact purpose of all the medications your baby needs and get instructions on administration such as proper dosage, possible side effects, handling missed doses, effectiveness of medication, and what circumstances would necessitate a call to the your health care providers before administering medication. Practice giving the medication in the hospital if possible.
- If your baby is going home and still requires the use of equipment such as an apnea monitor or oxygen, learn the proper use of the equipment as well as who and when to call if problems arise.
- Make sure everyone involved in caring for your baby is trained in infant CPR.
- Ask your team about how much stimulation is recommended for your baby and what signs to detect if your baby is over-stimulated, tired or hungry. Get to know your baby's personality, such as what he/she likes and dislikes, and how you should respond.

Medication Notes:

List of People Needing CPR Training:

- ❑ Learn how to take your baby's temperature.
- ❑ Start caring for your baby while he/she is still in the NICU by providing baths, dressing your baby, changing his/her diapers, etc. Such preparations will make you feel confident about doing these tasks alone at home.

Handle Financial and Insurance Concerns

- ❑ Add your baby to your insurance policy.
- ❑ While your baby is still in the NICU, talk with your hospital's social worker to find out if he/she qualifies for Supplemental Social Security (SSI), Women Infants and Children (WIC) assistance or other federal, state or local services. Fill out the paperwork prior to discharge.
- ❑ Also, ask the social worker if you are worried about affording electricity, phone service, transportation, or food when your baby leaves the NICU.

Prepare For Life at Home

- ❑ Make sure your team reviews all illnesses your baby may be at-risk for, such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and learn how to prevent and detect signs of illness at home. See PremieCare's RSV resources: www.PremieCare.org/rsv_resourceshtm.htm.
- ❑ Ask whether you are permitted to contact the NICU or step-down nurse regarding questions about general care for your baby once home but prior to your pediatric appointment. (Phone # to call _____)
- ❑ Obtain proper car seats or car beds for your baby and find out if the NICU staff will be testing for apnea or bradycardia while the baby is in the seat prior to discharge. Learn how to use the car seat by reading the manual before you take the baby home. You can also take your vehicle and car seat to your local fire or police department for a free car seat installation check. Visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' Car Seat Guide for details: www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm.
- ❑ Put your baby to sleep on his/her back, unless another position is indicated medically, to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and talk to your health care providers about "tummy time" when the baby is awake. See the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development website for more information about preventing SIDS: www.nichd.nih.gov/sids.
- ❑ Contact your fire department, emergency medical service, and the local utilities to let them know if you have a child who requires special medical equipment. In case of a power outage, your neighborhood can be prioritized when fixing utility problems.
- ❑ Download a growth chart with instructions for tracking children born preterm from the MOST website at www.MOSTonline.org/growthcharts.htm.



- ❑ Learn proper hand washing techniques. Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of illnesses. Keep soap, towels or hand cleansing gel in every room in which the baby will be. Also, make sure everyone in your home is instructed on proper hand washing. Learn more about hnd washing at: www.kidshealth.org/parent/general/sick/hand_washing.html.
- ❑ Obtain any special supplies needed such as preemie diapers or preemie nipples, and find out where to purchase preemie clothing.
- ❑ Ask if the number of visitors are allowed into your home should be limited, what precautions they should take, and under what circumstances when no one should visit.
- ❑ Find out how soon you can take your baby out in public. (When: _____)
- ❑ Clean your house of dust, pet hairs, paint smells, tobacco smoke, or other smells that may bother your baby's eyes, nose, and lungs. Find out if any other precautions may be needed if someone in your home or a visitor to your home is a smoker.
- ❑ Take any stored breast milk home and review the care and thawing process for once you are home.
- ❑ Post emergency phone numbers next to all the phones in your home and store in your cell phones as well.
- ❑ Discuss with extended family and friends precautions you will be taking in the care of your newborn to ensure continued good health and asking for their respect and support in doing so. See PreemieCare RSV letter for template for details: www.PremieCare.org/rsvletter.pdf.

List of Supplies Needed:

Smoker Precaution Notes:



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