

Renée Schine Crown Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU): Taking Your Baby Home

The day you have looked forward to is almost here. Your baby is going home. Please review the following information that will help ease your baby's transition from the hospital to home.

If you have any questions, please talk with the NICU staff.

Discharge Milestones

It is important to know that NICU babies must be able to meet certain milestones before they can be discharged.

These milestones include:

- Breathing room air only, without oxygen equipment.
- Having no apnea or bradycardia for 5 days.
- Keeping warm (maintaining body temperature) in an open crib.
- Taking all feedings by breast or bottle.
- Showing steady weight gain.

Getting Ready

To prepare for taking your baby home, parents should:

Obtain Baby Supplies

- Select a crib or bassinet with a tight-fitting, firm mattress covered by a fitted sheet.
- **Do not use any soft objects in baby's crib or bassinet. This includes:**
 - Thick or loose bedding.
 - Bumper pads.
 - Soft objects (pillows, toys, loose blankets).
- Purchase a car seat, rear-facing with 5-point harness. To keep your baby safe, it is important to use and install your car seat correctly. We encourage all parents to use the services of a certified car seat technician to avoid errors.
- Select baby supplies, including:
 - Diapers and t-shirts.
 - Breast pump (if needed).
 - Baby bath tub.
 - Formula (if needed).
 - Baby clothes.
 - Bottles and nipples (if needed).
 - Baby soap and shampoo.
 - Receiving blankets.
 - Burp cloths.

It is also important to have a digital thermometer for under-the-arm temperature readings. Do not use an ear thermometer.

Select a Pediatrician

You will need to see your baby's doctor (pediatrician) 1 to 2 days after discharge. You will need to make this appointment before your baby goes home.

Review Immunization Information

- Sign consent if your baby is to be immunized.
- Most pediatricians prefer that the first immunization be done in the hospital.

Circumcision

If you choose to have your baby boy circumcised, please arrange this procedure through your obstetrician. Written consent is needed for circumcision.

Baby Care Classes

Plan to attend free classes offered in the NICU to learn more about how to care for your baby. All classes are held in the Patient/Family Education Room and include infant CPR. Parents, grandparents and other caregivers are encouraged to learn infant CPR. Free infant CPR classes are held in the NICU at least once a week. The class times are posted as you enter the NICU. Talk with your nurse to register for this class.

Week of Discharge

Please begin taking your baby's belongings home, such as clothes. You can also begin to bring home your extra breast milk.

Rooming-in

You may room-in with your baby in the parent room (during the day or at night). Rooming-in with your baby will help you become more relaxed and allow time to practice caring for your baby before you go home. Talk with your baby's nurse to arrange for rooming in.

Review Care Guidelines

Be sure to review baby care guidelines with your NICU nurse, including:

- Routine baby care including bath, diapering, and taking the baby's temperature.
- Feedings.
- Infant safety.
- Knowing when to call the pediatrician.

If you have any breast feeding concerns, please ask your nurse.

Most babies have a car seat challenge test. This is done to see if:

- Your baby has any breathing problems while in a car seat.
- Certain car seat safeguards need to be put into place (padding, head support or limits on travel time).

Be sure to:

- Talk with the nurse about when the car seat is needed.
- Assemble the car seat at home (the base is not needed).
- Have the car seat straps in the lowest position.

Note: Make sure the car seat is the right size for your baby. A small preemie may need a special car seat. We do not recommend a convertible car seat.

If you would like to have photos of your baby taken, a signed consent form is needed. The nurse or staff at the reception desk can:

- Assist with the form.
- Provide information about costs.

Most of the photos are taken on the day of discharge, but can be arranged a day or two in advance.

Going Home

On the day of discharge, be sure to bring an outfit, blanket for your baby to wear home. Bring a cooler with ice packs to take home any extra breast milk. You will also be asked to verify the first appointment date with the pediatrician.

If your baby requires medication, those prescriptions will be filled at the hospital and given to you before your baby goes home. Your baby's nurse will review all guidelines for caring for your baby at home, including how to give any needed medication.

Before your baby can leave the unit, the parents' or guardians' ID bands will be matched with the baby's ID band to verify family relationship.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center. This state-of-the-art health library is located on the 3rd floor of the Galter Pavilion. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Center by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312-926-3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312-926-3112, TDD/TTY 312-944-2358 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312-926-1920, TDD/TTY 312-695-3661.

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