



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Caring for your baby while you are in the Critical Care Unit

Maternity

Patient information

## What is this information about?

This information is about caring for your baby when you are in the Critical Care Unit (CCU).

### It explains:

- how we can support you to spend some time with your baby and breastfeed if that is what you want to do
- the arrangements for your baby's visits to you
- how to hold your baby safely
- things that may make it easier for you to breastfeed if that is what you want to do.

## Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because you are in the Critical Care Unit (CCU) to recover from giving birth. It is likely that you will need some time to recover and may have been separated from your baby for a while.

### Reading this information and following the advice in it can:

- help you to spend time with your baby which will benefit you both
- help you to keep your baby safe, comfortable, and well while they are with you
- help to get breastfeeding off to the best start and make sure your baby is well fed.

## How soon can my baby visit me if I am on the CCU?

How soon people are well enough for their baby to visit is different for everyone.

Once you are well enough, CCU staff can contact the maternity unit to arrange for your birth partner to bring your baby to visit you. Someone from the maternity team will come with them to make sure your baby, and you, are safe.

## What is skin-to-skin contact with my baby and why is it important?

All babies have a biological need to be held close.

Skin-to-skin contact means holding your baby naked against your skin, usually under your top or under a blanket or cover.

It is good to hold your baby skin-to-skin as soon as possible if you can.

### Doing this:

- makes your body release a hormone (a chemical 'messenger' in your body) called oxytocin. Oxytocin is calming for you and your baby and is sometimes called the 'love hormone'.
- releases other hormones to support breastfeeding and mothering
- starts a strong instinct in your baby to breastfeed
- helps your baby's brain to develop.

## What tips can you give me to help me to hold my baby safely?

- Position yourself a little upright, not completely flat.
- Make sure you:
  - can see your baby's face
  - are chest to chest with your baby with their shoulders flat against your chest.
- Make sure your baby's:
  - neck is straight not bent
  - nose and mouth are uncovered
  - head is turned to one side
  - back is covered with a blanket.

If your baby seems tired or sleepy put them into their cot lying on their back.

## Feeding your baby

### How often is my baby likely to feed?

In the first 24 hours most babies are likely to feed at least three to four times. After this they should feed at least eight times in 24 hours.

### I would like to breastfeed my baby. What can I do to get breastfeeding off to the best start?

Breastfeeding can be difficult if you are in the CCU after giving birth and you will need recover.

There are things you can do to make breastfeeding easier and have a better result for you and your baby. These include:

- have skin-to-skin contact with your baby as often as you can
- keep your baby close to you, with the support of your partner. This will help you to recognise the signs (cues) that your baby is hungry and ready to feed.
- Feeding cues include your baby:
  - sucking their fists or fingers
  - having rapid eye movements
  - rooting (trying to find your nipple with their mouth).

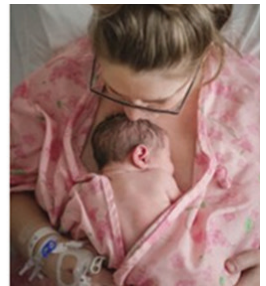
Your baby is likely to do some, or all, of these things before they show that they are hungry by crying.

- If you are unable to feed your baby at your breast, try hand expressing. This is a great way to:
  - stimulate you to produce milk
  - get colostrum to give your baby.

Hand-express as often as you can into a syringe or cup. Try to do this a minimum of eight times within 24 hours, including at night.

- ‘Finger feeding’ or responsive (paced) bottle feeding. Some babies need formula feeds before they are able to feed on breastmilk alone (establish breastfeeding). Finger feeding and paced bottle feeding can help to keep them interested in breastfeeding. This makes it easier for them to start breastfeeding for all of their feeds.

A member of the maternity team will support you to finger feed or with paced bottle feeding if you would like them to.



# Where can I find further information?

You can find further information in these videos and web links



Exaggerated latch technique: video on positioning and attachment



How to hand express



Responsive bottle feeding



Skin-to-skin contact



The Breastfeeding Network leaflet on expressing and storing breast milk



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