

## The Neonatal Unit – Your baby’s surroundings

Babies can be sensitive to light, noise, and smell. The neonatal unit can be a very busy and noisy environment at times. Your baby’s surroundings will be adapted to provide and improve your baby’s comfort. Your gentle voice, touch and smell are all comforting and familiar for your baby.

**Light** - Soft lighting and incubator covers can help. For procedures where brighter light is necessary, your baby’s eyes should be shaded. You can use your hands to shade your baby’s eyes.

**Noise** - Speaking softly and reducing background noise during procedures, can help. You can use your hands to cover your baby’s ears.



**Privacy** – You and your baby will always be cared for with dignity and respect. Screens can be provided to ensure privacy if you wish.

**Smells** - Perfumes and strong fragrances should be avoided. You can reduce strong smells, such as hand gel, by making sure your hands are completely dry following application.

**Physical environment** - While your baby is on the neonatal unit, we aim to copy the womb environment by using nests and boundaries around your baby.

Check out these resources for more information:

[Resources for nurturing sensory environment | Sensory Beginnings](#)

## Supporting your baby through medical interventions/ cares

During your baby's time on the neonatal unit, we may need to perform necessary tests and procedures including blood sampling, feeding tubes (NGT), hearing and eye tests. Extra support may be needed for your baby when bathing and weighing.

Supporting your baby through these experiences can improve their comfort. Where possible, we encourage you to be present and involved in supporting your baby, and we will always plan your baby's care with you.

There may be circumstances where this is not possible due to urgent situations. If you cannot be present during a procedure, a member of staff will be available to comfort your baby.

**Here are some ways that you can support your baby before, during and after procedures/cares:**

Positive, comforting touch with your baby

Your baby's sense of smell helps them to recognise you, and your baby will find this comforting and help them to feel calm. Bonding squares are also useful for this if procedures are carried out in your absence.

Your baby can be easily overwhelmed by sudden, unpredictable movements. Use your voice to gently prepare them. If they appear unsettled, pause. Keeping your baby's arms and legs tucked close to their body can help calm them (this can be achieved using wrapping techniques).



**Your voice** will be familiar to your baby, and they may find it soothing if you talk, hum, or sing to them

**Comfort holding (hand hugs)** – Use warm hands to cup your baby's feet/body or head. Start by offering your finger to hold

**Skin-to-skin/kangaroo** care is holding your baby in just a nappy against your bare chest. There are many benefits of this for both you and your baby. The staff on the unit will support you to do this as often and for as long as possible.

## Your Baby's Behaviour



Your baby has a unique way of communicating with you and letting you know when they are happy, anxious, or uncomfortable. Learning to understand your baby's expressions and movements is a valuable tool to help you all as a family to get to know each other and improve your baby's development.

Your baby's behaviour will be unique to them. Here are a few examples of what they might be trying to tell you.

### **“I'm tired, feeling a bit overwhelmed and need to rest”**



You may see me yawn, hiccup or turn away when I need to rest.

Placing your baby skin to skin or positioning them comfortably in their incubator in a nest allows them to rest. Putting your hand or a muslin square with your scent on them can also help.

### **“Sometimes when it all gets too much, I will put my hand in front of my face or raise my arms with my hands wide open.”**



Pause what's going on and let me rest in a supportive position. Adjusting the environment around me or kangaroo care/ skin to skin might also help.

**“I am curled up with my hands near my face, my feet are together and supported by a high boundary, and I have a relaxed expression on my face, I am feeling comfortable.”**



Talking to your baby, singing, or reading to them at this time helps with their brain development. If your baby starts to show signs of being over stimulated such as yawning, putting their hands in front of their face or turning away, gently lower your voice and pause your interaction.

## **Check out these online resources for more information and ideas:**

[Look at me – I’m talking to you | Parent resources | Bliss Home - Ei SMART](#)

