

HEY
it is
OKAY

To experience a range of emotions

There is no 'right' way to feel. You might not feel an immediate attachment to your baby, you might feel overwhelmed, sad, angry, guilty, like no-one understands, scared, numb, protective, proud or happy at times. If you feel like you need help then please seek out support by talking to your partner, a family member, a friend, a nurse, your health visitor, or your GP. Some units have Psychology service too. There is support out there for you. You are not alone.

To have a cry

This is not a sign of weakness, and it might help you to get everything out. It's also OK to not cry; we all cope in different ways.

To look after yourself

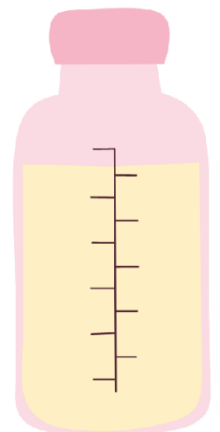
Your birth may have been straightforward or with added complications.

Physically and mentally your body will need some time to recover, and you will need to rest. Don't feel bad about this, be kind to yourself.

To find expressing hard

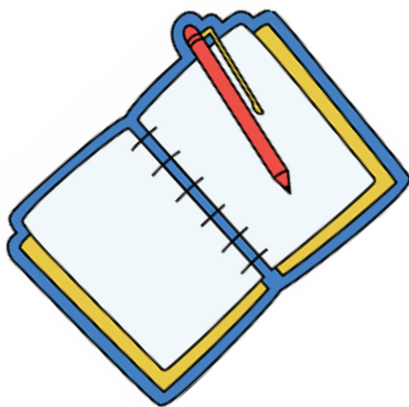
Being 'milked by a machine' is not the most natural thing in the world and probably something you never imagined yourself doing!

Some people find they produce lots of milk and others not so much – this is normal. Your nurse can support you to optimise what you produce and answer any questions.



To ask for help – Don't feel like you must do everything alone. Everyone has a different amount of support from family and friends.

Remember the staff on the unit can be part of this support.



To forget things – To begin with, everything may be unfamiliar and there are new faces everywhere!

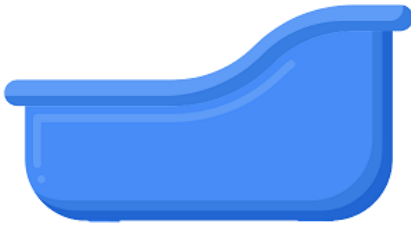
You might feel like you're being bombarded with medical information and terminology, and struggle to keep up. You can always ask staff to repeat information.

Some parents find it can help to keep a diary so you can take note of important details and jot down any questions you have, or make a note of important milestones and events.



To not want to talk about your experience

You'll probably feel like you're living and breathing the Neonatal Unit, and it can be hard when your family and friends all want to know the latest. Don't feel under pressure to keep everyone updated.



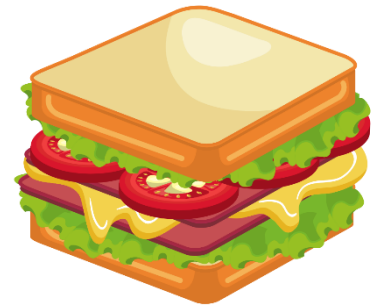
To focus on the positives

The first time you hold your baby, getting involved in cares, the first feed, baby gaining weight, giving baby a bath, your baby coming off their monitors!

To talk to other parents on the unit – Other parents on the unit might understand more than anyone else what you're going through. Some parents find talking to other parents helpful.

Take a break away from the unit

Getting a drink or something to eat, maybe even a bath or a sleep is okay. It's okay for you to spend time away from the unit. Your mental health is important, be kind to yourself!



To be nervous about moving to a different hospital

There are many reasons that your baby may need to transfer to another hospital. It can be an unsettling time and take a while to become familiar with the new staff and routines. Our Neonatal Journey resource has been developed to take with you to help with the transition.



To ask questions – No one expects you to understand everything about Neonatal Care, so it's okay to ask if you need further explanation.



To not want to go back to work – leaving your baby and partner might feel like the last thing you want to do, especially if your baby is still poorly. It can be useful to explore all options available to you with your employer, such as taking paternity/compassionate leave or holidays.

If you are struggling, please talk to someone.

To speak up – Shifts change, nurses and doctors can rotate between rooms but you will get to know about your baby in ways that others don't. If you are unsure or worried about anything, it is okay to say something to your baby's nurse.

