

Jargon Buster

You will hear lots of medical words whilst your baby is on the neonatal unit. This Jargon Buster has been created to help explain some of the more commonly used ones. It is important to note that your baby's neonatal experience is unique to them and not all these conditions, medications or equipment will apply to your baby.

A

AHP (Allied Health Professionals) – These are staff who work alongside the doctors and nurses caring for your baby and provide specialist care. E.g., Physiotherapist, speech, and language therapist etc.

Apnoea – Short bursts of time where your baby forgets to breathe.

Arterial Line – A cannula/umbilical catheter placed into an artery to monitor blood pressure (BP) and used for blood sampling.

B

Badger – The BadgerNet Summary system allows for the daily recording of events within a neonatal unit, including statutory data collection and reporting. In addition, the system includes an iPad app for easy information entry within the unit and Baby Diary, an app which enables parents to view regular updates and photos of their baby in the unit.

Bilirubin – Yellow pigment in your baby's blood (bilirubin) can turn the skin slightly yellow (Jaundice).

Blood gas – Routine blood gasses are taken via a heel prick and capillary tube. The blood will be taken to a blood gas machine and provides key information to help assess the effectiveness of/need for breathing support and how well your baby's blood is circulating around their body.

Blood glucose – Blood is taken usually from a heel prick to measure the level of glucose (sugar) in the baby's blood.

Blood Transfusion – Some babies may need a blood transfusion for several reasons, such as infection or bleeding before they were born. Premature babies may have a lack of red blood cells because they are not ready to make their own.

Bolus – A bolus is an extra dose of medicine or fluid given in one go rather than over a set time. It can also be used as a method when giving feeds too.

Bradycardia—Sometimes, a baby's heartrate can drop slowly or dramatically, this is known as a 'Brady'. Occasionally, this is accompanied by a desaturation (where baby's oxygen levels dip) and can be referred to as a 'Brady desat'.

C

Caffeine – is a stimulant to help your baby's breathing.

Cannula – This is where a needle is inserted into the skin to place a little plastic tube in a blood vessel (usually in their hands or feet) and is used to give your baby the medication that they need.

Capillary Tube – A very thin tube in which blood is collected.

Cares – This is when you change your baby's nappy and/or clean your baby.

Central Line – This is an IV (intravenous) line which is a soft, flexible tube placed inside a vein which is close to your baby's heart. It is also known as a long line.

Chest Drain – Some babies can get air which leaks into the space between the lungs and chest wall. Chest drains, which are little tubes, are placed into the chest cavity, and allow the excess air to drain off.

Chronic Lung Disease – Chronic Lung Disease is common in babies born premature who have needed longer term ventilation or needed it after 36 weeks. It means that your baby may need oxygen support once they are home.

Colostrum – Colostrum is the first milk breasts will produce.

Congenital hypothyroidism – Congenital hypothyroidism occurs when a newborn infant is born without the ability to make normal amounts of thyroid hormone.

Cooling blanket – A treatment which is given to some babies following hypoxia (see below) brain injuries. The blanket cools the body down and protects the brain and vital organs.

Comfort holding – Comfort holding is one of many ways for you and your baby to get to know each other and is a way to experience loving touch when your baby is not ready to be held.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)– CPR is a form of resuscitation.

D

Developmental Care – Babies are cared for in an environment that supports their development.

Desaturation/Desat – When a baby's blood oxygen levels drop below a certain percentage on the saturation monitor, the alarm will sound to alert staff caring for your baby. Most desaturations resolve quickly, but some require assessment and intervention.

Dietitian – Can have a significant impact on the care of sick and premature babies providing specialist individualised nutritional advice.

Donor Expressed Breast Milk – Human milk expressed by a donor that is then processed by a donor milk bank.

E



EBM – Expressed breast milk.

Echo (Cardiac Echo/Ultrasound Scan) – These are used to check for any heart problems. Your nurse and doctor will go through the procedure - with you before the scan happens.

Endotracheal Tube (ET Tube) – This is the tube which is placed in baby's windpipe (breathing pipe) and is connected to a ventilator to help them breathe.

Expressing – Collecting breastmilk by hand or using a breast pump.

Extubate – This is where the breathing tube is removed.

F

Family Integrated Care – A model of care which integrates the family into the neonatal team caring for baby.

G

Gastric Aspiration – A way to test if the NG/OG tube is in the correct position, the stomach. A small sample is taken using a syringe and placed on a PH stick to look for an acid response.

Grunting – A noise a baby makes when they are having difficulty breathing.

H

Heel Prick – A method of taking blood using a pinprick puncture in one heel.

Head scan – These routine scans are done to check for intraventricular haemorrhages, or abnormalities etc. Your consultant or nurse will go through this with you before the procedure happens.

Heart Murmur – See PDA

HDU (High Dependency Unit) – Looks after premature and term babies who do not need intensive care.

Humidity – Environmental humidity helps to support your baby's temperature inside an incubator.

Hydrocephalus – Sometimes babies will get extra fluid on their brain, if this happens there is an increase in head size.

Hyperglycaemia – is where a baby has a very high blood glucose level.

Hypoglycaemia – is where a baby has a very low blood glucose level.

Hypoxia— is a condition where the brain has been starved of oxygen and there is little oxygen in the blood tissues.

HIE (Hypoxic Ischaemic Encephalopathy) — is where there is a lack of oxygen and blood flow to the brain. It can occur before, during, or shortly after birth.

I

Incubator – Incubators are keeping your baby warm, as they are temperature controlled, you will still be able to touch, cuddle and help care for your baby.

Intravenous (IV) drip – An IV drip gives your baby medicine directly into their veins.

Intubate – This is where doctors will place a tube down baby's windpipe and connect it to a ventilator to give them breathing support.

Intraventricular Haemorrhage – In premature babies, the brain and its blood vessels are still developing. The brain has spaces within it, called ventricles, which are filled with fluid. The new blood vessels near these are very fragile. IVH is when blood from these fragile vessels leaks out into the ventricles (spaces).

J

Jaundice – Is very common in preterm and newborn babies. It is caused by excess bilirubin in the blood (hyperbilirubinemia) which can result in yellow discolouration of the sclerae (whites of the eyes) and skin. It is treated using a special blue lamp over your baby (see phototherapy). The level is measured by a blood test. In more severe cases baby's sometimes need a exchange transfusion.

K

Kangaroo Care– Kangaroo Care is skin-to-skin contact when a baby is undressed and placed against the parent's chest. A hat and a blanket for extra warmth might be necessary for very small babies.

L

LNU (Local Neonatal Unit) – For babies who need a higher level of medical and nursing support are cared for here. If your baby was born between 28 and 32 weeks' gestation this is the level of care your baby may require.

M

MDT (Multidisciplinary Team) – This is the whole team of staff who will work together to care for you and your baby. They include doctors, nurses, health care assistants etc.

Meconium – A dark green substance which is produced in the baby's digestive system before

birth and usually starts being passed as bowel movements in the first 24 hours after birth.

Meconium aspiration– Meconium aspiration is when a newborn baby breathes in a sticky substance called meconium just before or during birth.

Monitoring – You will see the monitor just above the baby's cot space. The monitors often display numbers and waveforms in different colours. Commonly measured parameters are Heart rate, ECG wave forms, Breathing rate, Oxygen levels and Blood pressures.

N

Nasal Flaring – Occurs when the nostrils widen while breathing. It can be a sign of difficulty breathing.

NEC (Necrotising Enterocolitis) – A serious condition which can affect newborn and premature babies where the tissue in the bowel (small/large intestines) becomes inflamed.

Newborn Blood Spot - All babies on the neonatal unit will be offered this screening. See 'screening section' within this package for more information. Sometimes this is referred to as the Guthrie Test.

NG tube – A nasal gastric tube is a thin tube placed into your baby's nose, and down into their tummy. This tube is used to give feeds and/or medicines.

NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care) – If your baby was born before 28 weeks gestation, or very unwell after birth. This is the level of care your baby will require.

O

O₂ – Oxygen

Occupational Therapist – Looks at the sensory environment and how this can support your baby's development. Also support the understanding of a baby's behavioural cues, aiming to reduce stress.

Oedema - Build-up of fluid in the body which causes the affected tissue to become swollen.

Oral Gastric (OG) tube – An oral gastric tube is a thin tube placed into your baby's mouth and into their tummy. This tube is used to give feeds and/or medicines.

Overnight Tracing – An overnight recording of your baby's oxygen saturation levels to guide the amount of supplementary oxygen needed.

P

PDA (Patent Ductus Arteriosus) – Also referred to as a PDA. An extra blood vessel called the ductus arteriosus. It is part of the baby's blood flow system in the womb. This will shrink and close on its own usually in the first few days of life but may take longer in premature babies. This is sometimes called a heart murmur.

PN (Parenteral Nutrition) – PN is often given into a vein (usually a central line) to very preterm babies until they can tolerate milk feeds. PN includes vital nutrients.

Phototherapy – Treatment using blue light for jaundice levels which need correcting. This can take

several days. Your babies' eyes will be protected using an eye mask.

Physiotherapist (PT) – Supports neonatal units with developmental care practices and appropriate early physiotherapy intervention strategies.

Plasma – Plasma carries blood cells around your baby's body and contain protein and minerals.

Platelets – Platelets will help your baby's blood to clot. Sometimes, babies may need a platelet transfusion if they are unable to clot very well.

Pneumonia – Pneumonia is a lung infection that can be treated with antibiotics.

Pneumothorax – A pneumothorax occurs when there is air between the chest wall and the lungs if a lung has leaked some air. (**See Chest drain**)

Psychologist – Clinical Psychologists and other accredited psychological professionals, with specialist expertise in neonatology, are key providers of evidence-based psychological assessment and interventions for parents, infants, and staff on neonatal units.

R

Respiratory distress – Respiratory distress happens when a baby's lungs are not fully developed and cannot provide enough oxygen causing breathing difficulties. It usually occurs when a baby's lungs have not produced enough surfactant (see Surfactant).

ROP (Retinopathy of Prematurity) Screening – ROP is a condition that can occur in babies born very prematurely, where abnormal blood vessels develop at the back of the eye. If required screening will take place on the Neonatal Unit.

S

SCU (Special Care Unit)– This can sometimes be called low dependency. Often babies born after 32 weeks gestation will require this level of care.

Sepsis – Sepsis is where infection goes into the blood stream.

Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) – Helps parents to manage their baby's feeding and developmental needs.

Surfactant – Surfactant is usually produced naturally in the lungs to support breathing. Some babies may need artificial surfactant which is delivered directly into their lungs via ET tube.

T

Tachycardia – Sometimes, a baby's heart rate can become increasingly fast. It can be caused by an infection, baby being too hot, upset, or uncomfortable.

U

Umbilical Artery Catheter – This line can be used to record continuous blood pressures and take blood samples.



Umbilical Venous Catheter – A UVC is an umbilical venous catheter and is used to give your baby the medications and fluids that they need.

Ultrasound – This can be a head scan, a tummy scan, or a heart scan. All are harmless to baby but will help give doctors a better idea of how to help your baby.