



Information for Parents

What to Expect During the First Few Days at Home

Congratulations! You and your baby(ies) are going home. Your baby will be experiencing new sounds, sights, and activities. This will take some adjustment for both you and your baby. You may notice your baby's behavior is somewhat different than when he or she was in the hospital. You and your baby will have to work towards establishing a new routine. The purpose of this handout is to help prepare you for the first few days at home.

Common behaviors you may notice about your baby in the first few days home:

- **Feeding:** babies may change their feeding schedule after getting home – they may not stay on an every three/four hour schedule like they were in the hospital, they may want to eat more often but take smaller or different amounts at each feeding.
- **Sleeping:** babies may not sleep as much or for long stretches as when they were in the NICU. Sometimes babies even confuse day and night. One parent said, "I thought my baby would never sleep again when we first went home, but after several days we got into a new routine and was so relieved to finally have my baby at home..." Babies tend to increase their awake time a few weeks past their due date.
- **Sounds:** babies make a lot of sounds that you may notice more at home than you did in the NICU. These sounds may range from amusing to interesting. Sometimes babies just make noises (e.g. whining, cooing, gurgling, sneezing, and grunting).
- **Spitting:** as babies get bigger, they eat more. Sometimes that means they may spit more. A small amount of spitting is normal. If you are worried about the size of your baby's spit, please call your pediatrician.
- **Peeing and pooping:** (please refer to your handout "Normal Elimination Patterns For Babies")
- **Crying:** babies typically cry a lot when they are hungry, tired, uncomfortable, or need comfort/stimulation. Go through your list of possible causes and fixes. Sometimes babies cry even when nothing is wrong. This can be normal. It is their way of communicating. For example, some babies just want to be held and carried.

After going home from the NICU other parents have reported they often undergo:

- A lack of sleep
- Feeling anxiety, depression, worry, or overwhelmed by their experience
- A sense of isolation

Although these experiences are common, they can still be challenging. Do not hesitate to contact your own physician if you are concerned about any of these difficulties.

Please feel free to contact the NICU if you have any questions about your baby's recommended care after you go home (medications, feedings, appointments, etc.) If there are new problems that you are worried about, please contact your baby's pediatrician/primary health care provider first. If your pediatrician would like to speak with one of the doctors or nurses who cared for your baby, we will always be glad to speak to them to provide more information on your baby's NICU course or to provide referral information for further care if needed.

Due to concern for exposure to infection after your baby has been discharged home, in most cases, your baby will not be able to be readmitted to the BIDMC NICU. If for some reason your baby needs to be hospitalized again, readmission will most likely be at another hospital. If your baby is admitted to another hospital within a month after discharge home, please contact the BIDMC NICU as we want to know what is happening with your baby and could offer to assist the admitting team at the other hospital as much as possible.