

# All about the... Neonatal Unit



*Information for parents and carers*



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# All about the Neonatal Unit



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## My baby's details

Baby's name \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

Time of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Birth weight \_\_\_\_\_

# All about the Neonatal Unit

## Dear Parents,

Congratulations on the birth of your baby and welcome to the Neonatal Unit (NNU).

The birth of a baby is a time of great joy and anticipation, but if your baby is born prematurely, is small or is sick, this will be a worrying time for you and your family and we are sure you will have many questions and concerns.

This booklet has been designed to help address these concerns and answer some of your questions. It also aims to introduce you to the Unit and the specially trained people who will be caring for your baby.

We hope it will be informative and answer many of your questions, while helping to provide you with the peace of mind that your baby is receiving the very best of care.

## Useful contact numbers

### Unit direct lines:

020 8510 7361

020 8510 7364

020 8510 7906

### SCBU:

020 8510 7069/5058

### Fax:

020 8510 7448

**If English is not your first language, or if you have any difficulty understanding anything in this booklet, please talk to a member of staff.**

## Our philosophy

- We aim to create a safe, family-centred environment that promotes bonding between babies and their families.
- Infants are cared for according to agreed care protocols where constant review is encouraged.
- We are committed to the delivery of care through a multidisciplinary team of health professionals.
- Our treatment plans are tailored to the individual needs of our babies and parents, respecting their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Through our knowledge and experience, we believe that the highest standards of care for newborn infants and their families are most likely to evolve in an environment where clinical care, teaching and research develop in parallel.

## Our staff

We have a highly specialised and dedicated staff. Our team of doctors are made up of consultants, specialist doctors and doctors training to be specialists in neonatal care.

Our nursing team consists of a lead nurse, matron, two clinical facilitators, neonatal nurse practitioners, an extensive experienced team of neonatal nurses, one parent counsellor/adviser and a breast-feeding nurse adviser.

These teams are supported by a community home-care team, a paediatric liaison health visitor, an occupational therapist, a dietitian, a speech and language therapist, social workers, family support workers and members of the chaplaincy team. Furthermore as a teaching hospital we also have student doctors, midwives and nurses working on the Unit too.

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## Visiting the Unit

Parents/carers are welcome to visit at anytime. Other relatives may visit the Unit, but they should be accompanied by one parent. We would ask that you show consideration regarding other visitors and we ask that no children other than your own are brought into the Unit.

Owing to lack of space we can only allow two visitors by the side of the cot/incubator, one of whom must be a parent.

We ask that only parents should visit after 10pm.

During the day there are times when you may be asked to leave the nursery. These will be during the nursing and medical staff handover times. This is to ensure

that patient confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Parents are welcome to join the ward round when medical staff are discussing their baby.

**Information regarding babies will only be given to the baby's parents.**

Parents are responsible for other children left in the parent's waiting room, and for supervising the children while they are visiting.

We expect the staff to behave in a polite and courteous manner to parents/carers at all times. We expect that visitors show the same courtesy to staff.

**Disruptive visitors will be asked to leave the Unit.**





## Our nurseries

**When you come to the Unit you will find it organised into differing nurseries depending on the level of care and attention each baby requires.**

### **Rooms 1, 2 and 3 Intensive Care and High Dependency Nurseries**

Babies are admitted into these nurseries because they are very ill or premature and require intensive or high dependency nursing and medical care.

### **Side Rooms 1 and 2**

These rooms may be used for intensive, high dependency, or special care, as well as isolation if required.

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## Special Care (SC) and Transitional Care (TC) nurseries

These nurseries aim to provide an atmosphere where families can gain confidence in caring for their babies in a relaxed and supported environment before taking them home.

The babies in these areas are improving and may only require basic monitoring. Often intermittent monitoring is all that is needed.



Parents are encouraged to fully participate in their baby's care and as you become more confident you will start to take over some of your baby's care, for instance, nappy changes, feeds, developmental care, etc.

When your baby goes to TC, as far as is practical for you, we would like you to be resident with your baby. This will enable you to fully get to know and care for your baby with support from our staff. We will offer as much support and education as you need about caring for your baby.

**When your baby is transferred to SC and TC, you will need to supply all nappies, cotton wool, wipes, clothes, creams and lotions.**

## Things to know

**Please note that babies are moved between different rooms depending on their condition and level of monitoring required.**

In all our nurseries, we aim for low noise and lights dimmed to encourage our babies to rest and thus encourage growth and development.

Partners are free to visit either of these Units at any time (other

visitors until 10pm). We would ask that you show discretion regarding other visitors and request that no children other than your own are brought onto either Unit. We are unable to let visitors in without a parent being present.

### **Hygiene is a top priority**

We take hygiene and cleanliness very seriously on the Unit to protect our babies. To maintain a high standard of hygiene we expect parents, carers and visitors, before entering the nurseries, to remove their outdoor clothing and hang it in the cloakroom provided. This is on your immediate right as you enter the Unit. There are lockers provided that require a £1 coin.

### **Hand washing is important to prevent infection to your baby.**

Always wash your hands each time you enter the Unit and before going in the nursery. There is a sink on the right just past the parents waiting room for your convenience.

Also ensure that you wash your hands after performing nappy changes and before you feed your baby. If you have more than one baby you must wash you hands



between each child, even if you have only touched or cuddled them, as it is easy for infection to spread from one to the other.

During the winter months, when colds and flu are more common, we may restrict visiting for children under the age of five to ensure the wellbeing of all babies in our care.

Under very special circumstances visiting may be restricted to just parents only. If this occurs all parents will be informed.

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## Staying with us

If you are staying in the hospital during the day or are using one of the parents' rooms, you are welcome to use Chatters Restaurant on the first floor of the hospital or the Ritazza Coffee Shop in the main reception for your meals. All meals should be eaten at the restaurants as only drinks are allowed on the Unit. Water and cold drinks are allowed in the nursery, but hot drinks only in the waiting or expressing room. More information over the page.

The parents' kitchen may be used to make drinks (tea and coffee).

Mobile phones are not allowed in the nurseries but can be used in the waiting room, hospital corridors and grounds.

Families are welcome to telephone the Unit to enquire about their baby. However, we may ask you to restrict the length of call as there are only two phones in the Special Care/Transitional Unit and they may be needed for use in an emergency.

## Parent information and teaching

- You will be able to discuss your baby's condition, treatment, progress and outcome with a member of staff on a one-to-one basis. Please ask the nurse looking after your baby or ask the ward clerks to make an appointment.
- **Parent-craft teaching - on Monday evenings 6.30 to 7.30pm.** (See notice board for subject).
- Support is offered by previous preterm babies' parents on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- Parents and family members can have access to one-to-one counselling for the duration of your baby's stay on the Unit. Counselling session is for one hour.

## Restaurant and Cafés

There are three eating places within the hospital:

- **Chatters** on level one green corridor, open from 7am to 10am (breakfast), 5:30pm to 8pm (supper) For hot meals, snacks, tea, coffee, cakes, sandwiches, and cold snacks. (There is also a vending machine available).
- **Café Royale** within Chatters for tea, coffee, cakes, sandwiches, and cold snacks. (There is also a vending machine available.)  
**Meals are not served to the general public in these areas at lunchtime 11.30am to 2pm.**
- **Café Ritazza** in main entrance foyer - open from 8am to 8pm for tea, coffee, sandwiches and pastries.

## Parents' kitchen area

The kitchen is situated on the main corridor outside the Neonatal Unit. It is equipped with a water boiler, microwave, fridge and TV. Milk and a small quantity of tea and coffee are provided. Please feel free to use these amenities and make yourself at home. However, you need to be given swipe card access for this room from the nurse in charge. For security reasons we ask that you do not give this card to other parents, but ask them to contact the nurse-in-charge themselves.

Bedrooms are available for parents wishing to stay close to their child or who have a long journey to/from the Unit.

Obviously priority is given to the parents of a sick baby.

## Interview room

This room can be used for counselling and meetings with doctors.

## Breast milk expressing room

(Affectionately known as the milking room). This room is available for mums to express their breast milk. Feel free to take your drinks and magazines with you.

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## League of Friends

The Friends are in the Outpatient Department – open from 9am to 3.30pm. Serves tea, coffee and sandwiches.

## Mobile telephones

You should switch off all mobile phones when entering the Unit as they may interfere with our electronic equipment. They can be used on the corridors and within the hospital grounds.

**A Payphone** is situated along the corridor just outside the Unit.

## Newsagents

This is in the main entrance foyer – open from 8am to 8pm.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can provide information, support and advice about Trust services. Based at the main entrance of the hospital.  
Tel: 020 8510 7315.

## Smoking

This is a 'no smoking' hospital – smoking is only permitted in the smoking shelters in the hospital grounds.

## Toilets

Visitors' toilets are situated:

- downstairs on the main thoroughfare.

## Complementary therapies

- Positioning and developmental care
- Baby massage
- Faith healing (please contact your own).

## You and your baby

### What can I do to help my baby?

- As soon as baby's condition allows, we encourage and assist you to hold/cuddle your little one. We encourage all parents to assist with the care of their babies: nappy changing, mouth care, supervised feeding, skin care etc.



- For babies who are very ill, you are encouraged to hold their tiny hands and read to them.



- If you so wish, you may bring in a small baby's soft toy to place in the incubator or cot. For the older baby a cot mobile may be useful, while personal headphones and music can be used occasionally. Please ask the nurse caring for your baby if this is OK.



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- We encourage you to spend as much time as possible with your baby.



- Breast-feeding – as a Unit we promote breast-feeding and seek to encourage and support all mothers who choose to breast-feed. Even when baby cannot suckle at the breast, the milk can be expressed and given to baby through a feeding tube that is passed through the nose or mouth into the stomach.
- As you are probably aware breast milk is extremely good for babies, especially babies born sick or premature as it is easier to digest. We encourage mums to express their breast milk until baby is able to suck at the breast.



You will be supplied with an expressing kit for use with the expressing machine. This is for your use only and to be kept by you until baby is discharged. Unfortunately we can only offer one set free of charge. If you lose your set you will be asked to contribute towards a new one.

The milk can be frozen (for up to three months), or stored in a fridge for up to 24 hours (if



your baby is currently being fed). If you prefer to express the milk at home we will supply bottles and labels for you to use and bring in when visiting.

Expressing and storage of breast milk – we have a room set aside for this purpose with electric breast pumps and steam sterilises.



### **What can I bring in for my baby?**

From the time your baby is admitted you can bring in:

- Small soft toys
- Keepsakes/mementos
- Religious mementos
- Family photos etc.

Please ask the nurse looking after your baby for the most appropriate place in your baby's incubator or cot to place these items.

We have our own laundry system on the Unit and we often have a supply of baby clothes that we wash ourselves. However, as your baby develops, you may wish to bring in:

- Personal clothing for your baby, such as vests, babygros, booties, etc. Please label them with baby's name. We will keep these separate for you to take away and wash.
- You can also bring in toiletries such as baby bath, lotion, oils etc. They must also be labelled with your baby's name.
- Mobiles (for the bigger babies only).

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## Routine and common procedures

There are routine and common procedures that all babies have on the Neonatal Unit.

These are:

- **IV Cannulation** – IV cannulas are inserted into veins to administer fluids directly into the baby's blood stream. As babies have small veins these sometimes 'tissue' (fluid seeps into the surrounding tissues). This will require a new IV cannula to be inserted.
- **Vitamin K** – Given routinely to all babies at birth.
- **Heel sampling** – Taking small amounts of blood from the heel for blood tests.
- **Septic screen** – If your baby is unwell or we suspect that he/she may have an infection, blood is taken for cultures and antibiotics started while awaiting results (cultures results take approximately 48hrs to come back).
- **Antibiotics** – Will be given as the baby's condition dictates.
- **Insertion of central lines** – Babies requiring intravenous nutrition or other long term fluids have long venous lines inserted.



## Preparing for home

### Discharge procedures

Once your baby is medically fit, he/she can be discharged home.

After admission you will have been given a social form to fill in which will enable us to assess your home circumstances and offer guidance to outside agencies, such as social worker, social services, health visitors and clinics.

If your baby has any specific medical or nursing needs the doctors and the community home-care sisters will have discussed these with you. Any relevant equipment, information, teaching and advice will have been given.

All parents and families are actively encouraged to attend basic resuscitation training prior to discharge.

We will automatically inform your health visitor about your baby and he/she will arrange to visit you following discharge from hospital. In certain circumstances the community home-care team will visit your baby at home.

We do not have strict rules about how big or how old your baby



has to be before going home. Obviously they need to be healthy, breast or bottle feeding well, and gaining weight appropriately. Mothers who live in another borough, even those who booked at Homerton Hospital, and mothers who booked in other hospitals, will have their baby transferred back to their local hospital, as soon as baby's condition is stable.

Please make sure that you have a suitable car seat to take your baby home in if travelling by car.

Your baby needs to be registered with a GP, as soon as possible after birth, preferably prior to

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discharge.

Babies going home on oxygen need to be registered with a GP earlier to enable an oxygen concentrator to be fitted in their homes.

Your baby's birth will also need to be registered at the Town Hall, in whichever borough your baby was born. A telephone call for appointment is usually required – please ask the nurse looking after your baby for details.

## Outpatient and follow-up appointments

At discharge from the Neonatal Unit you will be given a follow-up appointment to attend our outpatient clinic, if your baby was born before 32 weeks gestation or weighed 1.500kg (or less) at birth.

You may also be given an appointment for other medical reasons. The doctor will discuss this with you.

## Useful resources and numbers

- **Parents' Support Group**  
Mondays 6.30pm to 7.30pm on the Neonatal Unit.
- **Learning more about your baby**  
Half hour sessions giving individual information about your baby's overall progress and treatment 3pm to 6.30pm and 7.30pm to 8.30pm. (Please see nurse looking after your baby to book time)
- **BLISS**  
Main national charity supporting parents of premature babies.  
Tel. 020 7820 9471
- **CRY-SIS**  
National charity offering support and advice for parents whose babies cry excessively.  
Tel. 020 7404 5011
- **TAMPA** (Twin & Multiple Births Association)  
Tel. 0151 348 0020

- **CLAPA** (The Cleft Lip and Palate Association)  
Tel. 01245 225657
- **National breast-feeding support line**  
Tel. 0300 1000212
- **Breast-feeding**  
We have two breast-feeding counsellors in the hospital. Electric breast pumps can be bought or hired from Ameda (Tel 01823 336362). Ameda hand breast pumps can be bought from the Unit – please ask the nurse looking after your baby or the breast-feeding counsellor.

### Books

- 'Your premature baby 0-5yrs' by Nikki Bradford (ISBN 155 2976 556)
- 'Born too early' by Pete Moore (can be bought direct from Bliss – see above)
- Coping with your premature baby by Penny Stanway (ISBN 075 2815 962)

### Websites

[www.premature-babies.co.uk](http://www.premature-babies.co.uk)  
[www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk)  
[www.24weeksplus.com](http://www.24weeksplus.com)  
[www.tommys.org](http://www.tommys.org)

### Comments and Suggestions

We welcome your ideas and suggestions to help us provide the care you require.

You can 'Send a Message to Matron' by filling in a card and posting it in the post box provided at the reception desk.

### Acknowledgements

- Special thanks to all our past and present parents, too numerous to mention individually, who have generously given their time, advice and suggestions, helping to make this booklet more usable for all parents while assisting us in taking this booklet forward.
- Thanks also to the past/present medical and nursing staff who continued to offer advice, support and encouragement in this endeavour.



## Neonatal Unit

### Direct lines:

020 8510 7361

020 8510 7364

020 8510 7906

### SCBU:

020 8510 7069

020 8510 5058



Homerton University Hospital, Homerton Row, London E9 6SR.

Telephone: 020 8510 5555

[www.homerton.nhs.uk](http://www.homerton.nhs.uk)

Author: Neonatal team

Date: October 2010

Review date: October 2013



Homerton Fun Run

