



How to help...Your Newborn in the Hospital

When a newborn baby must be hospitalized, the newborn and caregivers are not able to bond in the way they had envisioned. Being bonded is so important for your baby's development, even when critically ill and hospitalized. The meaningful and typical interactions from home are often replaced with medical interventions. And although, at that time, the medical interventions are of the highest importance, there are some very important things mothers and fathers can do to help their newborn.

Below are some ways to help support your newborn

- o Remain involved in your newborn's care as much as possible (diaper changes, feedings).
- o Touch and hold your newborn when medically safe – holding your newborn skin to skin so s/he can feel your heartbeat and regulated breathing will aid in your newborn's body system regulation.
- o Your newborn's most well-developed sense is his/her sense of smell. Mother's scent is recognized at birth and is the basic foundation for attachment and bonding. Consider placing a small blanket held by the mother (or even with a few drops of breast milk on it) in your baby's crib (or talk to the nurse about incorporating it into the baby's bedding). Swaddle - newborns enjoy the tightness and confined space of a swaddle (like the womb). Please ask your newborn's nurse to show you how to do this if you aren't sure how.
- o Breastfeed (if safe and approved by your newborn's nurse) or offer a pacifier to your newborn as many newborns are soothed by sucking.
- o Offer "shushing" sounds, either by your voice or with a white-noise sound maker. Babies hear these types of sounds in the womb and can be calmed by them after birth as well.
- o When your newborn is awake, look into his/her face and allow him/her to look back at you, learning your face. Newborns and even older babies love to look at faces.
- o Provide cares in slow motion so your newborn has time to understand how her/his body is moving and regulate her/himself to the movement.
- o Reduce disturbing noises as much as possible.
- o Utilize natural lighting during awake/daytimes and darken the room when your newborn is napping and sleeping at night. This will help regulate your newborn's sleep and wake cycles.
- o Sing to your newborn or play quiet, calming music. Read to your newborn so that s/he hears your voice.
- o When your newborn cries, respond to soothe him/her as quickly as possible so that s/he knows comfort and help are on the way. Research has found that responding quickly to a newborn's cries/needs makes for a less fussy baby later on.
- o Remember, caring for a newborn is hard work, so self-care is important as well. Take short breaks from your newborn's crib to get fresh air and sunshine, eat healthy, drink lots of water, and get sleep. You can't take care of your newborn if you aren't taking care of yourself.