

After the NICU: Caring for Your Baby at Home

The day is finally here. Your baby is going home.

After so many other people have been taking care of your baby in the N-I-C-U, or NICK-yoo, you may wonder if you can do it all.

Feeling concerned, nervous, and a bit overwhelmed is completely normal.

It can help if you know what to expect.

Your baby may have extra medical concerns, but his or her basic needs are the same as those of any newborn baby.

At home, you will spend most of your time feeding, diapering, and comforting your baby.

Good nutrition, care, and lots of love will help your baby grow and heal.

It may also help to hold your baby as much as possible.

Before you leave the hospital, you'll get a plan that will help you take care of your baby.

If your doctor prescribed medicines, oxygen, or a feeding tube, follow the directions.

An important part of your care plan will include when you should call in case of an emergency.

Be sure to put your plan where it's easy to find, like next to your baby's bed or on your refrigerator.

Your baby may be fussy and sensitive to light, sounds, touch, and movement.

You can help your baby feel more comfortable by making your home a calm place.

When you and your baby are healthy enough for visitors, ask them to be sure they're up-to-date on their immunizations, to visit only if they're healthy and to wash their hands.

The change from being a parent in the NICU to being a parent at home may be stressful and a little scary.

Like any new parent, you may feel overwhelmed at times.

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It can help to talk about your challenges and what worries you, as well as the little things that add up to joy.

You may find that the best support comes from people who are facing or have faced the same things that you're concerned about.

Your hospital may have support groups, and there are support groups online too.

Now, it may seem like there's a lot to do and remember to care for your baby at home.

But you'll learn with practice. You'll have your care plan.

And always remember that the hospital and your baby's doctor are just a phone call away.