



## Preparing for Your Stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Information and services to prepare you for your baby's possible stay in the BC Women's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

Before your baby's birth, you may meet with a BC Women's NICU Physician or Nurse Practitioner. At this meeting, you will receive medical information about your baby's birth. You will also learn about:

- The Golden Hour: Care in the first hour after birth
- The importance of your active involvement in your baby's care in the NICU
- Benefits of early breast milk (colostrum) as oral immune therapy
- Benefits of Kangaroo Care and "hand hugging"
- Benefits of breast milk and breastfeeding
- Small Baby Care (if applicable)

We can also arrange a tour of the NICU for you and your partner or support person. Please speak to your nurse.

### You are part of your baby's Core Care Team.

As parents, you are a vital part of your baby's Core Care Team. *You are not a visitor here.* We welcome you to stay with your baby as much as possible.

Your baby's nurse can show you the many ways you can care for your baby, including holding your baby skin-to-skin, taking part in daily rounds, and more.

### Talk and touch

Touch is a normal and essential part of healing, even for premature and very ill babies. You can care for your baby by holding your baby in Kangaroo Care, facilitated tucking (hand hugging) or hand-holding. Every moment of your touch, combined with your soothing words, will help your baby feel safe and secure. Your voice and your touch helps decrease the stress of the NICU environment.

- **KANGAROO CARE** means holding your baby skin-to-skin (wearing only a diaper) against your bare chest. You can secure your baby with a wrap.
- **FACILITATED TUCKING** (hand hugging) means gently holding your baby's arms and legs folded in near their chest and stomach. This will help comfort and calm your baby.

### Supports for Families

We are here to support you as a family. You can access our services Monday to Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm.

### Indigenous Patient Navigator

When Indigenous women and their families are at BC Women's Hospital, our Indigenous patient navigator helps you get the information and support you need.

604-875-2348  
[indigenoushealthreferral@cw.bc.ca](mailto:indigenoushealthreferral@cw.bc.ca)

### Spiritual Care

Spirituality is unique for everyone. You are welcome to meet with our Spiritual Health Practitioners, and to discuss how they can support you and your family while you are here.

*Ask your nurse to contact Spiritual Care*

### Ethics Services

Confidential support for patients and families facing difficult medical decisions, and for the healthcare professionals caring for them.

Clinical Ethicist: 604-875-3182  
Toll-free: 1-888-300-3088 ext. 3182



### Lactation resources

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*Mothers' own breast milk is the recommended food for all babies. It is vital for premature or sick babies. Your colostrum and breast milk adapts to meet the needs of your baby. Breast milk acts as a medicine for premature or sick babies.*

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If you plan to breastfeed your baby, it is very important that you start to express your early milk as soon as possible after giving birth. This will help to build your milk supply.

Even if you do not plan to breastfeed, we encourage you to express drops of colostrum (early milk) for your baby. Colostrum has many important long term health benefits.

You may learn the following lactation terms in the NICU:

- **ORAL IMMUNE THERAPY (OIT)** is the process of giving a small amount of colostrum or breast milk to your baby. It provides important health benefits and builds your baby's immunity.
- **HAND EXPRESSION** is when you use your hands to remove your milk. Starting hand expression soon after birth increases your milk supply.
- **HANDS ON PUMPING** means using your hands to massage your breasts while using an electric breast pump. Hands on pumping increases milk supply.
- **PASTEURIZED DONOR HUMAN MILK (PDHM/"Donor Milk")** is recommended if your own milk is limited or not available. PDHM is similar to your own milk. It gives your baby antibodies to fight disease and infection. You can use PDHM until your milk supply increases.

If you have questions about lactation or donor milk, please ask your nurse. They can connect you with one of our Lactation Consultants. You can also phone BC Women's Lactation Services at 604-875-2282.

### Learn more on our website

Visit the **Parent resources** tab on our website to find:

- ✓ Our orientation manual: Your first few days in the NICU
- ✓ Informational videos
- ✓ Information on breastfeeding, oral immune therapy, Kangaroo Care, and more

Scan the QR code.

Or enter the URL:

<http://www.bcwomens.ca/our-services/neonatal-care/neonatal-intensive-care#Parent--resources>



### Ask your nurse

If you have questions, please ask your nurse. They will answer your questions or connect you with a team member that can help.