

Family integrated care (FICare) on the Neonatal Unit

This leaflet explains what FICare is, and how it can help you to bond with your baby before you go home. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of the team on the Neonatal Unit (NNU).

Our neonatal community is ready to support and care for you and your baby. You might not have been expecting to get to know your baby on the NNU. However, we are committed to giving your baby the high-quality care and treatment they need, and helping you to parent your baby in a way that feels right for you.

On the NNU, we believe that parents and staff are equal partners in the care of your baby. We will encourage you to be involved with caring for your baby as quickly as you feel able to after their birth. On our unit we follow a model of care called Family Integrated Care (FICare).

What is FICare?

All staff on the NNU will support you (parents or carers) to care for your baby as soon as possible after birth, as well as encouraging you to share the decisions about your baby's care.

We will help to guide and support you to carry out parenting roles (like changing, cleaning, feeding and holding your baby), as soon as you are ready. Tasks that are more medical remain the responsibility of the doctors, nurses and allied health professionals.

We see you as equal, essential members of the team looking after your baby, and pride ourselves on working together to get your baby home as soon as possible. We will support you to feel connected with your baby.

Why we practice FICare as a model of care

There is extensive evidence that FICare helps to achieve the best outcomes for your baby and your own wellbeing.

For babies, studies have shown FICare can help you to take your baby home earlier, increase your baby's weight gain, and increase breastfeeding rates. New evidence suggests it can also improve your baby's developmental outcomes.

For parents, research has shown lower anxiety, improved bonding with baby, improved relationships with staff and other parents, and increased confidence when it is time to go home.

What does this mean as a parent?

You will start to experience FICare as soon as your baby is born, starting with a cuddle in the delivery room, whenever this is safe for your baby.

From research, we know that the benefits listed above are seen when you are with your baby for as long as possible every day. We suggest that at least 1 parent or carer should be present for at least 6 hours a day. This might not be possible for all families, but if you can be with them every day, we ask you to aim for 6 hours as a minimum. We will ask you to attend educational sessions (when these are running) and learn to care for your baby with help from your bedside nurse, as soon as you are ready to.

These are some of the things you can be involved with as soon as you and your baby are ready:

- doing cares (changing nappies, mouth care, cleaning your baby)
- doing feeds (these might be through a nasogastric tube, or breast or bottle feeds)
- doing kangaroo care (this is cuddling your baby in skin-to-skin contact on your chest)
- comforting your baby during procedures (such as blood tests, head scans and other tests or treatments they need)

For you to be actively involved in the decision-making around your baby's care, we ask you to be present as much as possible for the daily ward round with the clinical teams. These take place between 9am and 12 midday. If you feel confident to, you might want to introduce your baby each day. We can support you with this.

The more time you can spend with your baby, the faster you will feel comfortable looking after them.

It might also be helpful to take short breaks during the day to help you recharge. You might like to do this in the parents room or go outside to get some fresh air.

You might find support, comfort, and strength in making connections with other parents in the unit. These valuable, unique relationships often last well beyond a parent's time in the unit. You might also find supportive by talking to staff during your time on the unit.

We have a neonatal psychology team for additional support. Parents have told us that talking about things that are worrying them, or difficulties they are having, is very helpful. It can make being on the unit and getting involved with caring for their baby easier. Please ask to be referred if you would like to meet with them.

What happens if you cannot be present as much as you want?

When you cannot be with your baby, they will continue to receive excellent care from the staff on the NNU. We will support you to be part of decision making, and can help you to take part in ward rounds virtually (by video call) if you want. The nursing team will continue to support you whenever you can be present.

How we will support you to care for your baby

We will support you as you learn to care for your baby. The clinical teams, mostly led by the nursing staff, will work with you, supporting you to become your baby's main caregiver.

There will be a mixture of bedside teaching from the nurses, some films to watch and group sessions to attend on the ward.

You will also have a parents' manual to complete, known as the Growing Home book. This is where you can keep a record of all the caring tasks that you have learnt and feel confident doing. This will act as a guide to go back to and help you to identify when you might need more help or training.

In the early days we will support you with learning how to provide the care your baby needs. We will do this at a pace that you are comfortable with. There is no hurry or pressure to immediately start caring for your baby. This will happen naturally as you spend time with them and start getting used to the things they need from you. Please speak to any of the staff on the NNU to understand more about FICare.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the NNU, **tel:** 020 7188 4045.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web:** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **tel:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm, **email:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline, **tel:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, **email:** mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **tel:** 020 7188 8801, **email:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint, contact the complaints department, **tel:** 020 7188 3514, **email:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, **tel:** 020 7188 8815, **email:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk



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