

# Tips for Family and Friends supporting parents with a baby in the NICU or SCN



As a concerned friend, you might struggle to know what to do, or say, when a baby is in a neonatal unit.

We've put together these tips to help you.

## DO...

- ✓ Congratulate the parents – welcome the baby into the world with a card, thoughtful gift or offer to post the birth announcement on socials.
- ✓ Acknowledge the toll this experience can take – ask 'How are you?' and actively listen when they respond.
- ✓ Check in with supportive messages – 'I'm thinking of you' or 'I'm here if you want to talk'.
- ✓ Focus on the positives – say things like 'You're doing a great job' or 'Your baby looks strong'.
- ✓ Help out with domestic duties – cook meals, do laundry, care for siblings, walk the dog.
- ✓ Offer to pass on information to family members.
- ✓ Drive the parents to the hospital – parking can be tricky, not to mention expensive.
- ✓ Offer to keep parents company in the hospital.

## DON'T...

- ✗ Compare the baby to others – this may only serve to maximise the parents' grief.
- ✗ Interfere or give parenting advice – everyone's journey is different.
- ✗ Abandon the parents – stay in touch; knowing you are thinking of them helps.
- ✗ Talk about setbacks the baby may face.
- ✗ Expect the parents to attend events or gatherings.
- ✗ Visit the family when you are sick.
- ✗ Compromise the baby's progress – respect the parents' wishes and instructions, e.g. don't kiss the baby when their immunity is low.

## AVOID SAYING THINGS LIKE ...

- ✗ Didn't you know something was wrong?
- ✗ At least you can get a full night's sleep while the baby is in the hospital.
- ✗ At least you didn't get huge and uncomfortable in your pregnancy.
- ✗ He/she must be in so much pain.
- ✗ Will they be normal when they get bigger?
- ✗ When can I hold the baby?
- ✗ It must be hard to watch someone else take care of your baby.
- ✗ How do you leave him/her in the hospital every night?



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