

# LEAVING THE UNIT



Congratulations on being a NICU and/or SCBU Graduate!

When your baby (or babies, in the case of multiples) was admitted, it was probably difficult to even imagine taking them home. You may have been in hospital for quite some time and now the big day has arrived. Heading home can often bring mixed emotions and be rather overwhelming, especially if your baby is coming home tube feeding, on oxygen or with medical issues. Working with parents who have been there and reflected on what helped them, here's a few things to consider.

## Rooming in

Before going home, some hospitals offer the chance to 'room in'. This means you stay in a room on or near the unit and care for your baby overnight for a few days. It is a good idea to use this opportunity if you can. It will give you more confidence in caring for your baby, while the unit staff are on hand to help you if necessary. It will also help you to find out what you feel you need to know before taking your baby home.

## Getting ready

If you will be expressing or bottle feeding your baby at home, it is helpful to bring in the bottles and teats so that your baby can start to get used to them. You may also like to bring in a brightly coloured or musical toy (check whether it's appropriate with the staff first) for your baby's cot and something which smells of home; for example, a special blanket. Once your baby arrives home, they will be comforted by familiar objects and smells.

## Transporting your baby home

By NZ law, all children under seven years of age must use an approved child restraint appropriate for their age and size. You must always use a suitable rear-facing baby car seat, even on the shortest of journeys. If you do not own a car, it is still advisable to borrow or hire a baby seat when taking your baby home from hospital by car or taxi. There may be a local loan scheme – it's worth investigating.



## Leaving the Unit:

As well as getting to know your baby, it is important to make sure you are confident with providing your baby's care. Learning CPR may make you feel more confident at home. It's a technique which you can use for anyone so it's very handy to have this 'up your sleeve'. If your baby is going home tube feeding or on oxygen, be sure to know how to operate the equipment prior to leaving. Ensure you know what medications to give and when. Now is the time to ask questions, so you know what to do if something starts beeping in the middle of the night!

- ✓ Do you know how to make your baby comfortable and reassured?
- ✓ Do you know how to give your baby a bath?
- ✓ Have you been shown how to give your baby medication?
- ✓ Have you been shown how to use any specialist equipment?
- ✓ If you would like to breastfeed, do you have enough information and support to help you?
- ✓ If you are expressing or bottle feeding, do you know how to sterilise bottles and make up your baby's feeds?
- ✓ Do you know how to monitor and control temperature?
- ✓ Are you aware of techniques to prevent against the risk of SUDI (Sudden unexpected death of an infant)?
- ✓ Do you have the contact details for your baby's GP and hospital handy and know how to get help at nights and weekends?