

Specialist neonatal respiratory care for babies born preterm

Information for the public

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Breathing support for preterm babies: the care you should expect

When babies are born early, or 'preterm' (before 37 weeks of pregnancy), they often need some extra help with breathing. This is because their lungs may not be developed enough for them to breathe well on their own. There are different ways to give breathing support depending on each baby's needs. Good care and treatment helps their lungs to develop well so that they can get stronger and leave hospital sooner.

We want this guideline to make a difference to babies and their families by making sure that:

- all preterm babies get the same high level of care when they need breathing support
- care teams involve and support parents and carers and treat them as equal partners in their baby's care
- care teams know which methods of breathing support and medicines work best for babies born at different stages of pregnancy, including very premature babies
- treatments that have not been shown to work well, are no longer used.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Healthcare professionals should give clear information, talk with you about the different options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

They should also:

- keep you fully informed about what's happening with your baby's care and take time to answer your questions
- support you to interact with and learn to care for your baby
- prepare you well for leaving hospital with your baby and tell you who to contact if you need help.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The NHS website has more information about [newborn respiratory distress syndrome](#) and [care for preterm babies](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Bliss](#) – for babies born sick or preterm, 020 7378 1122
- [Sands](#) – stillbirth and neonatal death charity, 0808 164 3332
- [Together for short lives](#), 0808 8088 100
- [Twins trust](#), 0800 138 0509

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with parents and carers of preterm babies who have needed breathing support, and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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