

SUPPORTING YOUR BABY WHILE IN THE HOSPITAL



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Having a sick baby is very hard. You may feel scared, sad, or not sure of what to do. Some babies need to stay in the hospital right after they're born. Others go home first but have to come back. In both ways, it can be tough for you and your baby.

When babies are in the hospital, they can't tell us how they feel with words, but they do show us through their actions. Some babies cry or get fussy. Others may sleep a lot, look blank, not play with toys, or not respond like they usually do. These are normal ways babies show stress. Be gentle with your baby and with yourself. Your love helps more than you know.

The **Early Connections team** wants you to know that you are not alone. We would like to offer support and a few tips to help during this tough time.



How Can Hospitals Be Hard for Babies?

Hospitals can feel scary or confusing for babies because of:

- Ouchy procedures (ones that hurt)
- Being away from family
- Strange and new places and people
- Not being able to move freely
- Loud machines and weird smells
- Changes in their daily routine

What Are Signs That Your Baby May Be Stressed?

When your baby is:

- Arching their back or arms
- Sleeping too much or not sleeping well
- Looking blank or not showing emotion
- Turning their head away
- Crying a lot and hard to calm
- Startling (getting scared) at sounds or movements
- Spitting up or not wanting to eat



How Do You Take Care of Yourself and Your Family?

You matter too. When you take care of yourself, you can take better care of your baby.

Try these tips:

- It's okay to take short breaks. Go for a walk, eat something, or talk to someone you trust.
- If you feel overwhelmed (that it gets to be too much), take deep breaths. Calm breathing helps your baby feel calm too.
- Talk to your baby's siblings. They may feel confused or worried. Let them know what's happening and ask how they're feeling.
- It's okay to write down what doctors say and ask questions. There may be a lot of information that takes time to understand.
- Family and friends may ask questions. How and when you share information is up to you. Share what feels right to you with people who you feel are helpful. It's also okay to not share with anyone.
- You're not alone. Your care team can connect you with people who help families. These are child life specialists, social workers, chaplains, or psychologists.

You are doing an amazing job. Your baby feels your love, even in the hospital. Keep showing up, asking questions, and taking care of yourself. We're here to help every step of the way.

What Can You Do to Help?

Your love is powerful. It helps your baby feel safe and start to heal.

Here are some ways to support your baby:

- Watch how your baby acts. If they seem scared, you can say something like, "That noise was scary, huh?" If they look away or close their eyes, they may need a break. If you just sit nearby quietly, it can help.
- Ask the nurses or doctors about safe ways to touch or hold your baby. Being close to you can calm them.
- Use your voice to connect. Your baby knows your voice. They can feel more calm when you talk or softly sing to them.
- Leave something special with your baby, like a photo or a cloth with your scent. Ask the nurse what's okay to leave in the crib.
- Ask questions about your baby's care. When you know what's going on, it can help you feel better.
- Bring things from home that help you and your baby feel more comfortable (like a favorite toy, pacifier, book, or snacks). Don't forget things you need too, like a phone charger or breast pump.



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