

# Baby needing transfer

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about a baby needing transfer. Informed consent and woman centred care are integral to health care in Queensland. Decisions about your baby's care are always up to you.

**IMPORTANT:** This is general information only. Ask your doctor, midwife or nurse about your own situation.

## Why does your baby need to go to a different hospital?

Your baby is being moved (transferred) to another hospital because the care they need cannot be provided at your local hospital. This can be a stressful time for you.

Transfer to another hospital may be because your baby:

- is sick
- is premature (born early)
- is having difficulty breathing
- had difficulties during birth
- requires surgery at a children's hospital
- requires special tests
- requires care from a neonatal or paediatric (children's) specialist team (e.g. doctors, and nurses that look after sick and premature babies)

When your baby is ready, they will most likely be transferred back to your local hospital before they are discharged from hospital.

## How will your baby travel to the other hospital?

Your baby will travel in a special baby transport cot. A doctor and/or nurses with special training in caring for sick and premature babies (neonatal retrieval team), will transfer your baby and will be with them at all times. Your baby will be transferred by ambulance, helicopter or plane. Your local hospital staff will let you know more about this.

## Where will your baby be transferred?

Your local hospital team or neonatal retrieval team will let you know where your baby is going. They will explain why that is the most suitable hospital for your baby.

## Can you travel with your baby?

Sometimes one parent may be able to travel with their baby. This is not always possible due to the size of the transport vehicle or aircraft.

After birth it is always the aim to keep mothers and babies together. If you are unwell or require medical care, you won't be able to travel with your baby. You may be transferred at a different time. This will be discussed with you to make the best arrangements for you and your baby.

If you are well, but it is not possible to travel with your baby, you will need to make your own plans to travel to your baby's hospital. Your local hospital staff can help you with this.

## Can you get help with the cost of travelling to another hospital?

Queensland Health's *Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme* (PTSS) helps with travel and accommodation costs when specialist care is required in a different hospital. Ask to speak to a social worker, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health worker or liaison officer, or patient travel coordinator to get help with this (if available). This may occur at your local hospital or at the hospital your baby is going.

## How can you find out how your baby is?

A doctor or nurse from the retrieval team will call you once they have arrived at the neonatal unit. The hospital staff from the neonatal unit may also call you to discuss your baby and the plan for care.

You will also be given the contact number for the neonatal unit where your baby is going. You can phone and get updates.



## Can you stay with your baby?

It is important that you spend as much time as possible with your baby. If you don't need to be admitted to hospital, staying near the hospital may be an option. Some larger hospitals have accommodation close by (such as Ronald McDonald House). This is subject to availability. Your local hospital staff will help you find out about this, or you can ask when you arrive at your baby's hospital.

Social workers, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers or liaison officers are available to help you.

## Can you feed your baby?

Sometimes it may not be possible to feed your baby before they are transferred. If you are planning on breastfeeding, you may like to start expressing your breast milk. This will help establish your milk supply so there is some ready for when your baby starts feeding. The healthcare team will help you with this.

If you have already expressed some breast milk, ensure it is labelled with your name, and the date and time when it was expressed. Your breast milk will be stored in a cool pack and will go with your baby. Your local hospital team can help you with this.

## What should you take with you?

Clothes, shoes, personal items/toiletries, and cash or EFTPOS card. Some items you might also like to take (but are not essential):

- breast pump (if you have one), and small esky and cold brick for storing your breast milk
- book/journal and pens to record daily events in your baby's life
- camera and/or video camera
- mobile phone and charger



*Special baby transport cot with monitors and other equipment*

## What can you expect when you arrive at the hospital?

You will meet the staff looking after your baby. They will give you some information about the neonatal unit.

You will need to wash your hands each time you visit your baby in the neonatal unit. The staff will help you with how and where to do this.

## Can you visit and look after your baby?

The staff will help you to visit, see and care for your baby. You will be able to sit with your baby and touch them. You may also like to talk and read to them. If your baby is well enough, you may also be able to help with nappy changes and feeding.

You can discuss your baby's progress and treatment with the healthcare team looking after them.

## Are siblings, family and friends able to visit your baby?

Each hospital has its own visiting policy. The staff at your baby's hospital will discuss this with you. To protect your baby from infections, anyone with coughs, colds, a sore throat or other infections are not able to visit until they are well. This is to protect your baby and others in the neonatal unit.

Please let the staff know if you feel unwell or have an infection (e.g. cold, sore throat, cold sore, diarrhoea).

## Who can you ask if you have questions?

The hospital staff caring for your baby and the neonatal retrieval team will be able to help you with your questions and concerns. This can be a difficult and stressful time for you. Sometimes you may need things explained to you more than once. Talk to the healthcare team looking after your baby regularly and discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

Many parents feel overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated or uncomfortable when their baby needs to go to another hospital. Most hospitals have social workers, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers or liaison officers available for emotional and practical support.

### Support & information

**Queensland Clinical Guidelines Parent information**

**Preterm Infant's Parent Association (PIPA)** (1300 773 672) <http://www.pipa.org.au>

**Life's Little Treasures Foundation** (1300 697 736) Support for families of premature and sick babies

<http://www.lifeslittletreasures.org.au>

**Miracle Babies** (1300 622 243) Support for parents and families of premature babies <http://www.miraclebabies.org.au>

**Heart kids** (1800432785) Supports people impacted by childhood heart disease <https://www.heartkids.org.au>

**13HEALTH** (13 432584) Telephone service providing health information, referral and services to the public. <http://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health>

**Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline** (1800 882 436) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling about conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. <http://www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline>

**MumSpace:** Supports mental and emotional wellbeing during and beyond pregnancy <http://www.mumspace.com.au>

**Lifeline** (13 11 14) Telephone crisis support service <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

**Australian Breastfeeding Association** (1800 686 268) Community based self-help group offers information, counselling, and support services, on breastfeeding issues <http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au>