

Allied Health Professionals in the Neonatal Unit

Working together to care for your baby



In the 2018 Advancing Healthcare Awards, this service won two awards:

- the Department of Health award for transforming the workforce
- the overall winner across all categories



Health and
Social Care

Public Health Agency

12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.

Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).

www.publichealth.hscni.net

Find us on:



This leaflet explains the role of the dietitian, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and speech and language therapist in caring for your baby.

If you would like to speak to any of these professionals regarding your baby's care please ask your baby's nurse.

The Dietitian

The dietitian's focus is to ensure that the nutritional needs of your baby are met during this important stage when growth is fastest and needs are greatest. Our role is to develop a nutritional care plan that takes into consideration the way your baby is fed, any medications being given and their nutritional needs. We provide advice about growth and all aspects of infant feeding. When your baby is ready to move from tube feeding we will advise and support you to succeed with your choice of breastfeeding or bottlefeeding.

The Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapists (OTs) understand that your baby is shaped by their sensory experiences – what they see, smell, hear, taste and feel. OTs look at how your baby interacts with the environment and how that affects their development. 'Occupations' are everyday activities and OTs can provide advice and support for your baby regarding, sleep, positioning, holding, feeding, daily care and interaction with you. We will work with you to provide positive sensory experiences while your baby is in the unit.

The Physiotherapist

The role of the physiotherapist is to support your baby's development in the neonatal unit. We provide early assessment and advice for you about your baby. The physiotherapist understands how your baby develops and moves. We may advise you on ways that you can help encourage your baby's movements. We also provide advice on how you can help your baby day to day through touch and positioning. We will support you and your baby with developmental play ideas that are appropriate for their stage as he or she grows.

The Speech and Language Therapist

As well as being specialists in communication, speech and language therapists (SLTs) also have specialist training and skills in assessing the process of feeding and swallowing. We assess oral reflexes, including sucking and swallowing and look to see if your baby is showing signs of 'readiness' to feed. If it is too soon for oral feeding (by mouth), we will give you written advice on 'positive touch', which will make it easier for your baby to move to oral feeding when he or she is ready. We can advise on weaning onto solids when your baby is ready to do this.