

# Supportive Positioning

## Supportive Positioning advice for parents with premature babies on the Neonatal Unit created with parents and staff

This Information only applies to parents with a premature baby currently on a neonatal unit who are not yet ready for discharge.

As your premature baby gets ready for discharge from the unit all supportive positioning aids will have been removed in preparation for home.

It is not intended for term babies who are currently on a neonatal unit or any baby who has been discharged from a neonatal unit.

All parents and carers should follow the safe sleep guidance given at discharge. A link to the lullaby safe sleep guidance can be found here: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

## What is Supportive Positioning?

Supportive positioning makes sure your baby has the right support, for example using towels or bed sheets for them to have a nice curled up posture similar to how they would have been positioned in the womb. This allows them to:

- Regulate some bodily functions such as breathing rate and their ability to deal with pain and stress
- Protect their sleep which is very important for early brain development
- Benefits their longer-term physical development of skills such as crawling/walking and handwriting
- It is only used for babies on a neonatal unit who are being monitored

## How can I help my baby?

- When you feel ready to take an active role in your baby's care, please speak to your unit team.
- Supporting the position of your baby to make sure they are comfortable and are in a nice curled up posture helps with their longer-term development. The best way to achieve this is with skin to skin where your baby is directly next to your skin in a curled-up position with hands towards their face and you supporting them. If skin to skin or cuddles out of the cot are not possible then other ways of supporting the position of your baby can be used.
- When looking at your baby you want to be able to see that they look comfortable. Your team of health professionals on the neonatal unit will be able to chat with you over what signs to look for.

Further information can also be gained by looking at the All Wrapped Up Package and Our Neonatal Journey



[Yorkshire & Humber Neonatal Families - All Wrapped Up Package](#)



[Yorkshire & Humber Neonatal Families - Our Neonatal Journey – Full Document](#)

## How will I know my baby's position is well supported?

1. The nest or boundary should be deep enough to contain your baby's arms and legs. Keeping a curled-up position within the nest or boundary as the picture illustrates.



2. The nest or boundary should be close enough to them to be able to push against it and not so close to them that they cannot move.
3. The nest or boundary is firm enough that when your baby moves within it the structure remains and the nest/ boundary does not collapse.

4. Is your baby able to hold their head in the middle and move it side to side? If not, do they have a gel pillow/ other positioning aid under their head/shoulders to prevent head moulding which can develop from being in one position for a period of time.
5. When your baby is on their tummy, make sure they look supported and curled up with shoulders slightly rounded and hands towards their face, hips and knees bent. The nest or boundary should be deep enough to contain them if they were to push out with their legs.
6. When your baby is on their side their hands should be positioned as close to their face as possible, and their legs able to come together.



7. Most importantly make sure your baby looks settled and content.

If you have concerns about your baby's positioning, please discuss with those helping you to care for your baby on the unit. You can ask for support in making sure that your baby is comfortable, and staff can give you the skills to be able to reposition them yourselves as baby wants or needs to.

Useful Links for information on nest building, position changes in a nest can be found here and are also in the All Wrapped Up package (link above) with a step-by-step written guide.



## Useful Links

### Nest Building:

[www.vimeo.com/422228530/0030ddaeb2](https://www.vimeo.com/422228530/0030ddaeb2)

### Position changes in a nest:

[www.vimeo.com/425671388/42e5364e2e](https://www.vimeo.com/425671388/42e5364e2e)

**Early activity Ideas:** As your baby graduates from the neonatal unit and goes home they will be wanting to play more and will have more awake periods. The links below offer some great support and advice on activity ideas or positions of play you can do with your baby which will all have a positive impact on their longer-term development. They are all free and easily downloadable.

### Parent Resources:

[www.eismart.co.uk](http://www.eismart.co.uk)

### Awake Time Ideas:

[www.apcp.csp.org.uk](http://www.apcp.csp.org.uk)

Please feedback any comments regarding this information to Joanne Adams Physiotherapist for the Neonatal ODN at [Joanne.Bleasdale@nhs.net](mailto:Joanne.Bleasdale@nhs.net)

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