



What is a Neonatal Physiotherapy Service?

A Neonatal Physiotherapist aims to support the development of babies who may be at risk of having movement or developmental difficulties due to:-

- Prematurity
- Problems before, during or after birth
- Problems affecting joints or muscles
- Other problems that may affect how they move

Who is referred to the Neonatal Physiotherapist?

Babies born earlier than 30 weeks are currently routinely referred to the Physiotherapist. Other babies maybe referred following a discussion between the medical and nursing staff.

What does a Physiotherapy Assessment involve?

Developmental assessment – The physiotherapist may handle your baby to feel how they are moving, and watch your baby's active movements when they are awake and happy. This may involve placing your baby on their tummy, back and side.

Other Assessments – These may include specifically looking at your baby's movement and strength.

Physiotherapy on the Unit

After an assessment, the physiotherapist will be able to advise you how your baby's movements are developing. If they would benefit from support with their development the physiotherapist will advise you and the nursing staff on ways you can help encourage their movement. This may include ways to position, handle and carry your baby, developmental play ideas, and stretches.

This advice is not usually a list of exercises, but ways to handle your baby throughout the day and night to help their development.

Physiotherapy Follow-up at Home

Once discharged home some babies will continue to be followed up by the physiotherapist. This is usually to monitor their movement development – i.e. watching them learn to roll, sit, and stand etc., until they are walking.

Frequency of appointments depends on each baby's needs, but are usually around 2, 3, 4, 8 and 12 months corrected age.

The baby's motor development is assessed using the *Alberta Infant Motor Scale (AIMS)*, which involves observing what your baby can do on their back, tummy, in sitting and standing. A video assessment (*Precht/General Movement Assessment*) is often also used as part of monitoring your baby's movement patterns. The Physiotherapist will explain more about this during your appointment.

Remember – *Motor development is measured from the baby's corrected age (i.e. from their due date)*

Regular Physiotherapy

Some babies may require regular input from a physiotherapist, because of their diagnosis or because their movement skills need more help to develop. The Neonatal physiotherapist will discuss this with the family and then transfer treatment to a paediatric physiotherapist based at your local Children's Centre:-

Serennu Children's Centre – Newport
Caerphilly Children's Centre – Caerphilly
Nevill Hall Children's Centre - Abergavenny

If you have any questions or worries about your baby's movements or development please talk to the Neonatal Physiotherapist when she is on the Unit (usually Wednesday) or leave a message on the number below.

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