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Information for Parents

Car Safety Seat Advice When your baby has been on the Neonatal Unit

Congratulations on the birth of your baby

This information leaflet is designed to provide safety information regarding car seats for parents of those babies who have been born early or very sick.

In accordance with the current Car Safety Law within the United Kingdom all new-born babies when discharged home from hospital must be transported in a car safety seat.

The purchase of a car safety seat is a major purchase for all new parents. There are many manufacturers and designs from which to choose from. **There are designs available that allow for a more laid back way of lying, this design has been found to provide babies with a safer lying/sitting position.** Although the most popular design appears to be where the car seat is incorporated into the buggy this is not suitable for babies born too early or are very small at birth. The use of this type of car seat plus travelling system can mean babies are spend longer periods of time in their car seats!

Why is my baby at risk?

Babies who are born early (that is before 37 weeks gestation) and low birth weight less than 2.5 Kilograms (5lb 8oz) can have reduced tone which results in poor posture and causes head lag (this is when a baby is not able to support its head, the chin rests on the chest and causes obstruction of the airways.) This means a baby may not have enough oxygen going to the brain. The criteria for Infant Car Seat Challenge.

What does this mean for me and my baby?

To identify those babies at risk, all babies going home from the Neonatal Unit after being born early or have required breathing support during their stay are monitored in their car seat before going home. This is called "the Infant Car Seat Challenge". This involves your baby sitting in the car seat that they will be travelling home in and their oxygen saturation levels are monitored for one hour. Whilst in the car seat your baby has to maintain their oxygen levels above 95%, if they are unable to do this, they have "failed" the car seat challenge.

What if my baby is able to maintain their oxygen levels whilst in the car seat?

If your baby is able to maintain their oxygen levels whilst in the car seat the discharge will go ahead as planned.

What if my baby is not able to maintain their oxygen levels whilst in the car seat?

This means your baby has not been able to maintain their oxygen levels whilst in the car seat and it is not safe for them to be discharged home.

What happens next?

- Your discharge will unfortunately have to be delayed.
- This will obviously be a disappointment to you and your family.
- The safety of your baby in a car seat when you go home is very important.
- The Car Seat Challenge will need to be repeated, how long before the test will be a Consultant decision. This will enable your baby to have recovered from previous test and be that little bit older before retesting. This can sometimes make a difference.
- If there is no change and your baby does not maintain their oxygen levels whilst in the car seat we will need to find out if there is any other reason that may cause your baby to "fail" the car seat test. This could be due to age, gestation, posture and tone or infection.

- Also, if your car seat is not the type that is laid back, you may need to look at a model of car seat that provides a more laid back approach.

Even though your baby has passed the car seat challenge you should still be cautious when your baby is in a car seat and there are things you can do to reduce the risk.

What can I do to reduce the risk to my baby?

1. Car seats are for travelling in a car only
2. Keep journey to short periods of time, if you have a long journey, have plenty of breaks and take the baby out of the car seat.
3. Always have an adult travelling in the back of the car who can observe your baby for any colour change or if the baby becomes too quiet.
4. If you take your baby out for the day in buggy with car seat, take short breaks where the baby can be taken out of the car seat and allowed to stretch.
5. **A car seat must not be used as a sitting device.**
6. **A car seat must not be used for sleeping.**

A Consultant can request at any time a car seat challenge for any baby that is being discharged home.

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**