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Taking care of your mental health

When your baby is in special care

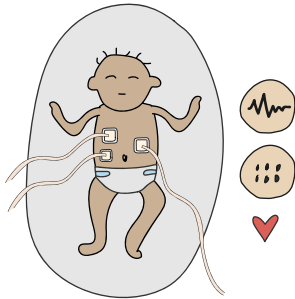
A simple guide

This resource is available
in multiple languages.
Ask your midwife for
more information.



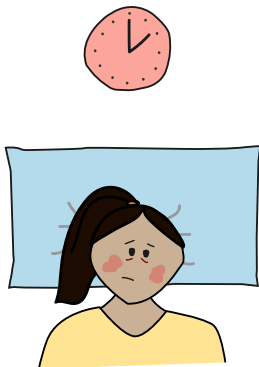
Surrey and Sussex

Taking care of your mental health when your baby is in special care



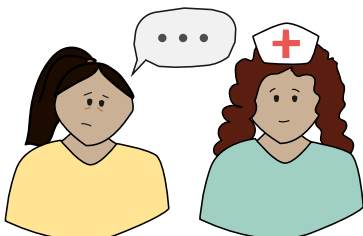
Having a sick or premature baby can have a huge impact on your mental health.

It is common to feel worried or upset when your baby is in the neonatal unit and once their stay has ended.



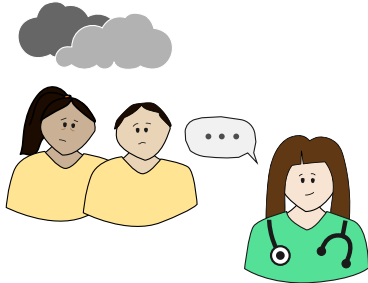
It is also very common for parents on a neonatal unit to:

- ☐ Have trouble sleeping.
- ☐ Have very vivid bad memories.
- ☐ Have nightmares.
- ☐ Feel anxious a lot of the time.



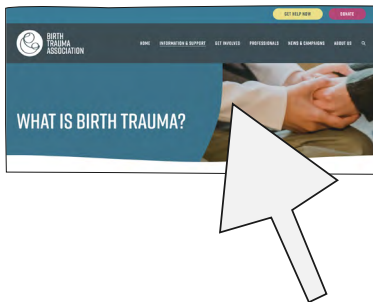
Talking to someone about how you are feeling can help. This might be a member of the neonatal team, your midwife, health visitor, or GP.

Taking care of your mental health when your baby is in special care



If these feelings last for a long time you might have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a condition caused by very scary or upsetting events.

You are not alone.



The Birth Trauma Association offers information and support.

Click on the link below to find out more.

birthtraumaassociation.org/what-is-birth-trauma

Taking care of your mental health when your baby is in special care



If you need help right now you can:

- Call 111 and choose the mental health option.
- Call the Samaritans on 116 123.

In Sussex you can also:

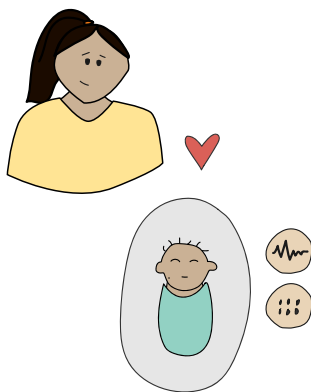
Text the word SUSSEX to 85258.

In Surrey you can also:

Call 0800 915 4644.

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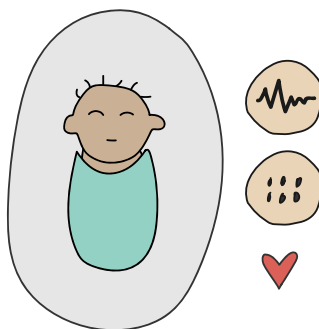
Bonding with your baby



It can take time for any parent to bond with their baby.

It can be harder if you or your baby are staying on a hospital ward.

This can be worse if your baby has been moved from one neonatal unit to another.

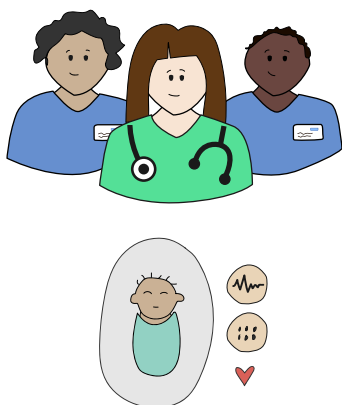


You may have spent time away from your baby. You may not be able to hold them.

If you have been unwell, you might not be able to care for your baby in the way you want.

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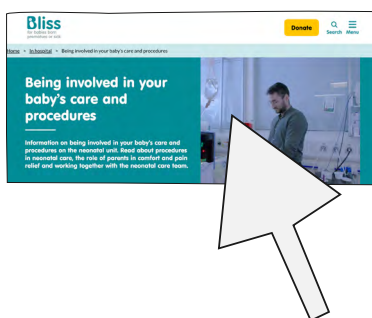
Bonding with your baby



Having lots of people caring for your baby can make you feel unsure about what you can do.

Some people find it helpful to get more involved in their baby's care. This can be through talking, gentle touch or just being present. Neonatal unit staff will be able to help you with this.

Some people find this scary. It is okay to be scared.



Bliss has information on getting involved in your baby's care.

Click on the link below to view the information.

bliss.org.uk/parents/in-hospital/being-involved-in-your-babys-care-and-procedures

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Bonding with your baby



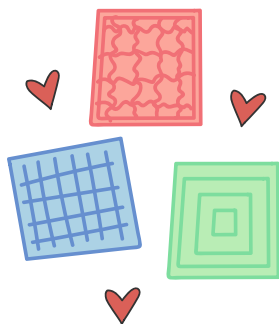
Having to leave your baby on the unit can be upsetting.

You might feel guilty or have a sense of loss.

You might find it helpful to:

- Write to your baby about how you feel.
- Record your voice for your baby.
- Ask staff for updates.
- Use bonding squares.

You should also remember to take care of your own physical needs.



Bonding squares are pieces of fabric that you and your baby keep close.

Then you swap them so you can smell each other.

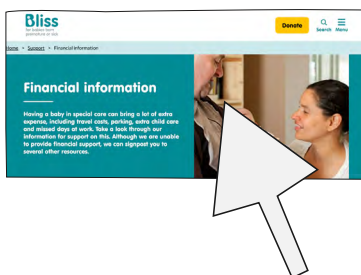
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Practical support



Having a baby in hospital can bring a lot of extra expenses. Worry about travel costs, where to stay and missed work can add to your stress.

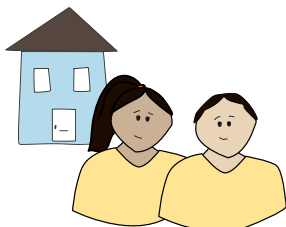
Ask a member of staff about help with parking, meal and medication costs.



Bliss has information on support available for your family.

Click on the link below to find out more.

bliss.org.uk/parents/support/financial-information-and-support-for-families



Some units have rooms nearby for parents to stay. Unit staff will be able to tell you if this is possible.

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Practical support



Food banks can help if you are struggling with food costs.

Click on the link below to find out more about using a food bank.

citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/food-bank/using-a-food-bank

Click on the link below for a list of some of the foodbanks in Sussex.

womenshealthsussex.org/professionals/library/support-with-obtaining-food

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Getting ready to go home



Getting ready to take your baby home for the first time can be exciting. It can also be scary.



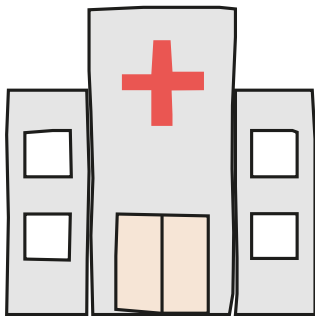
You might feel like you are not ready to leave. You might worry about a lack of support.

Lots of parents have these feelings.

If you do not feel ready to go home, or have any other worries, talk to your care team.

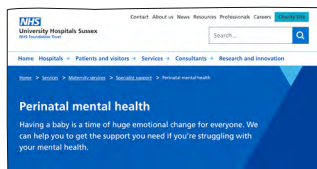
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Who can help

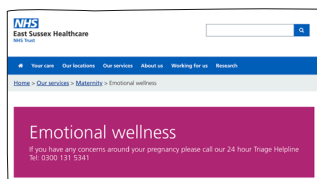


Your care team are here to support your mental health while your baby is in the neonatal unit. Your hospital's specialist mental health midwife may be able to support you.

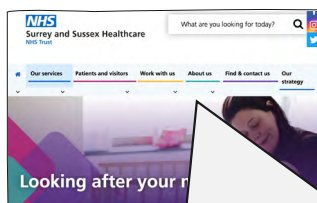
You can also talk to your GP or health visitor about how you are feeling.



Click on the links below to find out more about support in your area.



West Sussex and Brighton & Hove: uhsussex.nhs.uk/services/maternity/specialist-support/mental-health



East Sussex: esht.nhs.uk/service/maternity/emotional-wellness

Surrey: surreyandsussex.nhs.uk/our-services/womens-services/maternity-services/your-mental-wellbeing-during-and-after-pregnancy

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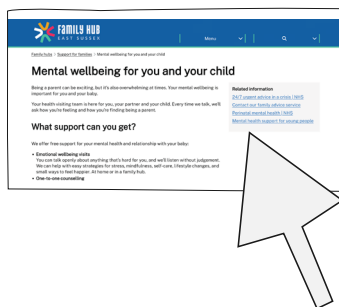
Who can help



Click on the links below for more information on health visitors in your area:

Brighton and West Sussex:

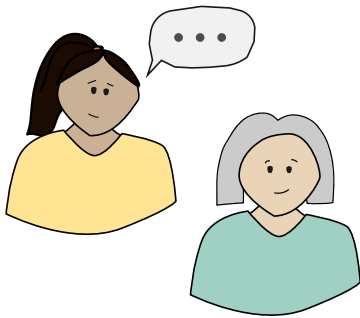
healthforunder5s.co.uk/sussex/services/specialist-support/specialist-health-visitors-perinatal-and-infant-mental-health-pnmh



East Sussex: familyhubs.eastsussex.gov.uk/families/mental-wellbeing

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Who can help



NHS talking therapies can help with your mental health. They involve talking to an expert about how you are feeling.

You can get support using the links below. Your GP can also refer you.

Brighton: brightonandhove wellbeing.org/talking-therapies

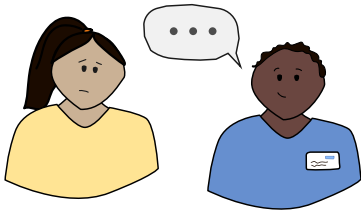
East Sussex: healthinmind.org.uk

West Sussex:
westsussex talkingtherapies.nhs.uk

Surrey: mindmattersnhs.co.uk

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Who can help



Your doctor or midwife may refer you to the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service for further support.



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- Call the Samaritans on 116 123.

In Sussex you can also:

Text the word SUSSEX to 85258.

In Surrey you can also:

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For further information on neonatal care and your mental health see:

NHS England South East – Parent information on neonatal care
neonatalnetworkssoutheast.nhs.uk/parents-families/parent-information

Bliss – Emotional and practical support
bliss.org.uk/parents/support/emotional-support

Bliss – Information on parents' mental health
bliss.org.uk/parents/support/impact-mental-health-premature-sick-baby

Twins Trust – Support for parents of twins, triplets and more
twinstrust.org

If you do not have internet, you can ask your care team to print you a copy of any resources in this guide.

This guide has been reviewed by service users and support staff as well as lived experience champions and staff of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance.