

Natal Care LX Incubator Parent Information Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT IS AN INCUBATOR?

An incubator is a medical device that creates an environment similar to the womb. It is most often used to provide warmth and to help regulate your baby's temperature. In some situations, the incubator may also be used to provide supplemental oxygen to help your baby breathe better and/or humidity to help prevent water loss.

WHY DOES MY BABY NEED AN INCUBATOR?

When a baby is born early or when a baby is sick, they sometimes have trouble maintaining their temperature.

The part of the brain that regulates temperature is not fully developed until about 34-36 weeks gestation. If your baby was born prematurely (earlier than 34-36 weeks gestation), they may need help keeping their body temperature stable.

If your baby is sick or has an infection, he or she may also have fluctuations in their temperature.

The incubator helps keep your baby's temperature at a safe, constant temperature that is conducive to growth and healing.

IS THE INCUBATOR PAINFUL TO MY BABY?

The incubator is used to create a comfortable environment for your baby. The incubator itself does not cause pain.

CAN I HOLD MY BABY?

Skin to skin contact between a mother or father and a baby can be very healing and help nurture the bond with the baby. During certain periods of time, you may be able to hold your baby. Please talk with your baby's nurse to discuss your baby's condition and plan for cuddling with your baby.

HOW LONG WILL MY BABY NEED TO STAY IN THE INCUBATOR?

The length of time your baby needs to spend inside the incubator depends completely on your baby's medical condition and ability to regulate temperature on his/her own. As your baby grows and stabilizes, your doctor may 'wean' your baby to an open crib.

Weaning your baby to an open crib may include swaddling your baby in a blanket and turning the heat source of the incubator OFF. The nurse will check your baby's temperature regularly to make sure he/she is able to keep a normal temperature. If this happens, the next step will be to move your baby to an open crib. Again, the nurse will closely monitor your baby's temperature to make sure it is adequate and stable.

Sometimes a baby is not ready to go to an open crib and has trouble keeping a stable temperature when removed from the incubator. In that situation, the baby may need to go back inside the incubator for help with temperature regulation and warming. Maintaining temperature takes a lot of energy and your doctor will not want your baby to struggle with temperature and will help save that energy by letting the incubator maintain the warmth for your baby.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY BABY WHILE HE/SHE IS IN THE INCUBATOR?

One of the most important things you can do to help your baby is to make sure you and all of family members wash your hands, every time, before touching your baby – even if you've already scrubbed prior to entry to the intensive care unit. If you or any of your family are not feeling well, it is best to stay home and get better. If you have any doubt, please talk with your doctor or nurse before coming into contact with your baby.

Sleep can be very recuperative for your baby. Please talk with your baby's nurse to plan care that is clustered around feeding time. This will help ensure your baby has adequate periods of undisturbed sleep.

While holding your baby talk in a soft voice, hum, or sing softly. Your baby recognizes your voice and will be soothed by hearing you speak. Gently rock and stroke your baby. Your touch is very special and this will help to strengthen your bond.

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

If you have any additional questions or concerns, talk to your baby's doctor or nurse. Ask about your baby's plan of care and how you can participate. Be involved where appropriate and communicate with the medical team regularly.