

6 Steps to Ease the Transition Home from the NICU

Bringing your baby home from the NICU is exciting, emotional, and overwhelming all at once. While discharge planning often focuses on your baby's medical progress, there are practical things you can do now to feel more prepared and supported when the day finally comes.

1. Create a System to Stay Organized

Purchase a planner with both monthly and weekly layouts. Use it to keep track of:

- Medical appointments
- Therapy evaluations
- Insurance calls
- Medical equipment deliveries
- Billing and paperwork deadlines

Having everything in one place can reduce stress and help you feel more in control during a season that often feels chaotic.

2. Build a “NICU Binder”

Get a small binder with dividers that can fit inside your diaper bag. Keep important documents together, including:

- Appointment summaries
- Copies of completed paperwork
- Contact information for providers and specialists
- Medication lists and diagnoses
- Therapy notes and care plans

This binder becomes your go-to resource for appointments, emergencies, and care coordination.

3. Start Therapy & Early Intervention Planning Early

Before discharge, begin contacting:

- Early Intervention programs
- Private therapy offices (Feeding, occupational, physical, or speech therapists)

Ask about waitlists and complete intake paperwork ahead of time (place completed forms in binder). Getting started early can help avoid delays once your baby is home.

4. Take Time to Care for Yourself

Schedule intentional time for yourself before discharge day arrives. Whether it's:

- A date night
- Dinner with friends
- A quiet coffee run
- An afternoon to rest

Give yourself space to breathe. Once your baby comes home, much of your energy will shift toward caregiving. You deserve care too.

5. Build Your Village

Think about the people in your life who are willing to learn your baby's care routine. This may include:

- Medication administration
- G-tube feeds
- Oxygen management
- Trach care
- Comforting and soothing techniques

Your support system matters. It is okay to ask for help and teach trusted loved ones how to care for your baby safely.

6. Review Your Family Schedule Ahead of Time

Take time to map out:

- Work schedules
- School pick-ups and activities
- Therapy appointments
- Follow-up clinic visits

Planning ahead can help reduce overwhelm and make balancing your family's needs more manageable during the transition home.

The transition home from the NICU is not just a discharge but a major life adjustment. Preparation will not eliminate the challenges, but it can help you feel more confident, supported, and ready for this next chapter.

It's a NICU World