**Goals to Meet Prior to Going Home**

How will I know when my baby will be ready to go home from the NICU?

Baby shows maturity and readiness:

* Medically stable without episodes of apnea (long pauses in breathing) or bradycardia (abnormal slowing of the heart rate)
* Baby can maintain their temperature in an open crib
* Able to consistently breast and/or bottle feed AND consistently gain weight
* Able to sleep in a flat, supine position

Routine screenings that will need to be completed:

* Newborn Blood Spot Screen (simple blood test that checks for several rare but treatable disorders)
* Special eye exam for infants born prior to 30 weeks gestation
* Hearing screening
* Angle tolerance testing using your baby’s car seat (testing baby’s ability to maintain open airway while in an angled position)
* Critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) screening and possibly an ultrasound of the heart
* There may be other special tests or evaluations based on baby’s gestational age at birth and clinical needs

What parents need to know and do to prepare for their baby’s discharge:

* You will need to decide on a primary care provider for your baby after discharge. This person will help you manage your baby’s healthcare needs. The NICU team will give the primary care provider a summary of your baby’s NICU stay including all tests, special needs and things that still need to be monitored.
* You will need to make sure you have the basic supplies to care for your baby at home including:
	+ Bed for baby (crib, bassinet, play yard, or bedside sleeper that is specifically marketed for infant sleeping)
	+ Clothes for baby to wear
	+ Blankets
	+ Feeding items (bottles and formula) as needed
	+ Diapers and cleaning wipes
	+ Car seat
* There are various programs that can help monitor and support your baby’s growth and development after discharge. A hospital social worker will visit with you to talk about these programs and help as you decide what’s best for your baby.
* Almost all parents will “room in” with their baby before going home. Think of this as a practice session where you can stay at the hospital for the day and night (or maybe longer) and provide all the care that your baby needs. The NICU team will be there to answer questions and guide you through this transition to help you feel confident and comfortable when it’s time to take your baby home.
* The NICU team will provide education on any specific care needs for your baby. This may include:
* Special feedings – If your baby needs special feedings or extra calories, the team will teach you how to prepare these feedings and give you opportunities to practice.
* Medications – The team will make sure you understand why it’s needed, when you should give it and tips on how to give it. You’ll likely get these medications before baby is discharged so you can practice giving them.
* Medical equipment – If your baby is discharged with any equipment, the team teach you how it works and make sure you know what to do and who to contact if you have any trouble.
* Specialty follow up – If your baby needs to have any follow up appointments with specialty providers, the team will provide you with a detailed list with all the important information.
* Infant CPR – Parents may be eligible to receive infant CPR training prior to discharge.
* Infection prevention and signs and symptoms to report – There are things that can be done to reduce the chances of your baby getting sick. The staff will talk about simple things that can make a big difference in your baby’s health!

Every baby is unique – it’s important to remember that every baby has different needs and develops at their own pace! Your baby will tell you when they’re ready so spend your time learning your baby’s cues.