

# Place of Preterm Birth and Hospital Transfer

## Whānau Information

### Why is place of preterm birth and hospital transfer important?

Pēpi should be cared for in a hospital able to provide the right level of specialised care. Ideally pēpi should be born in that hospital. This means that when preterm birth is about to happen, wāhine/people and their whānau may need to be transferred to a hospital away from home.

Most preterm pēpi require extra care after they are born. Depending on how many weeks pēpi is when they are born and their needs, this may be in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or a Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU).

Not all hospitals in Aotearoa have a NICU and/or SCBU and so care may need to be provided by a different hospital to your local one. Transfer to the right hospital will be arranged by the team looking after you. A healthcare professional will usually accompany you in an ambulance, helicopter, plane or car.



### Are there benefits of hospital transfer before rather than after preterm birth?

Pēpi who are **born in a hospital** with the right level of care have **better outcomes** than pēpi who are **born elsewhere** and transferred after birth. This is particularly important for pēpi born before 28 weeks, the benefits include:

- Higher chance of survival without brain injury
- Less severe brain injury.

Transferring to a specialised hospital whilst still pregnant (also called an *in-utero* transfer) also gives you the chance to meet the team who will be caring for your pēpi before birth happens.

### When is hospital transfer for preterm birth recommended?

- If preterm pēpi requires a level of care higher than your local hospital provides
- It is most important when birth may be expected close to the limits of survival (23–24 weeks)
- If the NICU or SCBU at your local hospital is full and there is more capacity at another hospital to provide the best care for pēpi.

### When is hospital transfer for preterm birth not recommended?

- If birth is expected before 22<sup>+0</sup> weeks, as pēpi born before this time are too small to survive.

Hospital transfer **after** birth may be the safest option:

- If an emergency birth is recommended because of an immediate risk to your and/or pēpi health
- If birth is expected to happen very soon.

# What help is available to deal with the challenges of transferring to a hospital away from home for preterm birth?

Moving to another city doesn't mean you have to be separated from whānau

Your local hospital can help find and fund accommodation for whānau. An example of this is Ronald McDonald House based in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Pōneke (Wellington) and Ōtatahui (Christchurch). There may be some charges for whānau, your local team will provide information

Moving to another city can have financial costs for you and whānau

Your transfer will be organised and paid for by your local hospital as part of the National Travel Assistance programme, this will also provide some funding for a support person <https://info.health.nz/services-support/support-services/national-travel-assistance>

Living away from home for a time can impact your ability to work

A hospital social worker will be able to help you assess your eligibility and access support from Work and Income and the Inland Revenue Department

Being away from home may add to the emotional impact of a preterm birth

Talk to the midwives and doctors caring for you about how you are feeling. They can refer you for support from a social worker and/or the maternal mental health team. You should also aim to keep in contact with your own midwife

## Other questions you may have?

### Which hospital will I be transferred to?

There are six 'Level 3' hospitals in Aotearoa able to provide NICU services for pēpi born from 23 weeks. These are in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland City and Counties Manukau), Kirikiriroa (Hamilton), Pōneke (Wellington), Ōtatahui (Christchurch) and Ōtepoti (Dunedin). Several other hospitals provide 'Level 2' care from 28 weeks, 32 weeks or 34 weeks. Your doctors and midwives will talk with you about which hospital you are going to. Deciding which hospital is best for you and your pēpi depends on things like:

- Which hospital is closest
- The level of care pēpi needs (considering how many weeks pregnant you are and pēpi size)
- Which NICU or SCBU has the best availability of staff and cots to look after your pēpi. This may change day to day.



### How long will we be away from home for?

The length of your stay away from home depends on how soon after transfer pēpi is born, the gestation pēpi is born at, how well your pēpi is after birth and how much support they require as they grow.

Pēpi may be discharged straight home or transferred to a NICU or SCBU closer to home once they require less intensive care. Your doctors will be able to give you more information about how long you might be away from home based on your particular situation.

*This Carosika Collaborative whānau information tool should be provided and used to support conversations between whānau and healthcare providers.*

*For more information including access to Taonga Tuku Iho (national best practice guide), you can access the Carosika Collaborative website at [www.carosikacollaborative.co.nz](http://www.carosikacollaborative.co.nz) or by using the QR code.*



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