

# Sound on the neonatal unit: A Parent's guide



Your baby's hearing develops early in pregnancy.

The main parts of the inner ear are fully formed by 20 weeks gestation. By 28 weeks gestation your baby can tell the difference between male and female voices and by 34 weeks gestation your baby learns to block out sound to remain asleep.

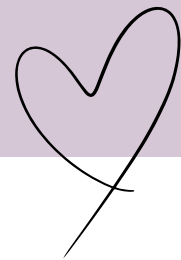
Hearing is very important in the development of language. When in the womb, your baby is protected by loud noise by the amniotic fluid. In the neonatal unit, there are loud, sudden and unexpected sounds that can startle your baby and disrupt their sleep.

Incubators do not block out sounds and equipment such as breathing support and monitor alarms add to sound levels, making it more challenging for your baby to hear your voice. Sudden, loud noise can be stressful for a baby born early

Your baby will love to hear **your voice** more than anything else. Reading, talking or singing to your baby will help them soothe.



# Here are some simple tips, you can use to help protect your baby from stressful sounds and provide pleasurable sounds instead:



- ✓ Be aware of noise and keep voices low, near your baby.
- ✓ Take care with incubator doors, close them quietly, using the soft close catch.
- ✓ Open the incubator portholes when talking to your baby - to reduce the distortion of your voice through the incubator walls.
- ✓ Try not to put anything down on top of the incubator.
- ✓ Speak to your baby in a quiet, gentle, soothing voice, so they can enjoy your voice.
- ✓ If your baby shows a strong response to noise, try and keep conversations away from the incubator, when possible.
- ✓ Use a thick cover over baby's incubator to help muffle noise.
- ✓ Be generous with the bedding inside an incubator, it helps to absorb noise and keep your baby settled.
- ✓ Recorded singing or voice, should be used with caution e.g. consider the timing. Is your baby awake and ready for some interaction? It should never be played repetitively as this could add to general noise for your baby.
- ✓ Try to notice how your baby responds to different noises, so that we can learn about what he likes or dislikes and make changes to his care. (For further information explaining how your baby is communicating with you, please ask you baby's nurse for a free copy of the booklet '**Look at me I'm talking to you**').

