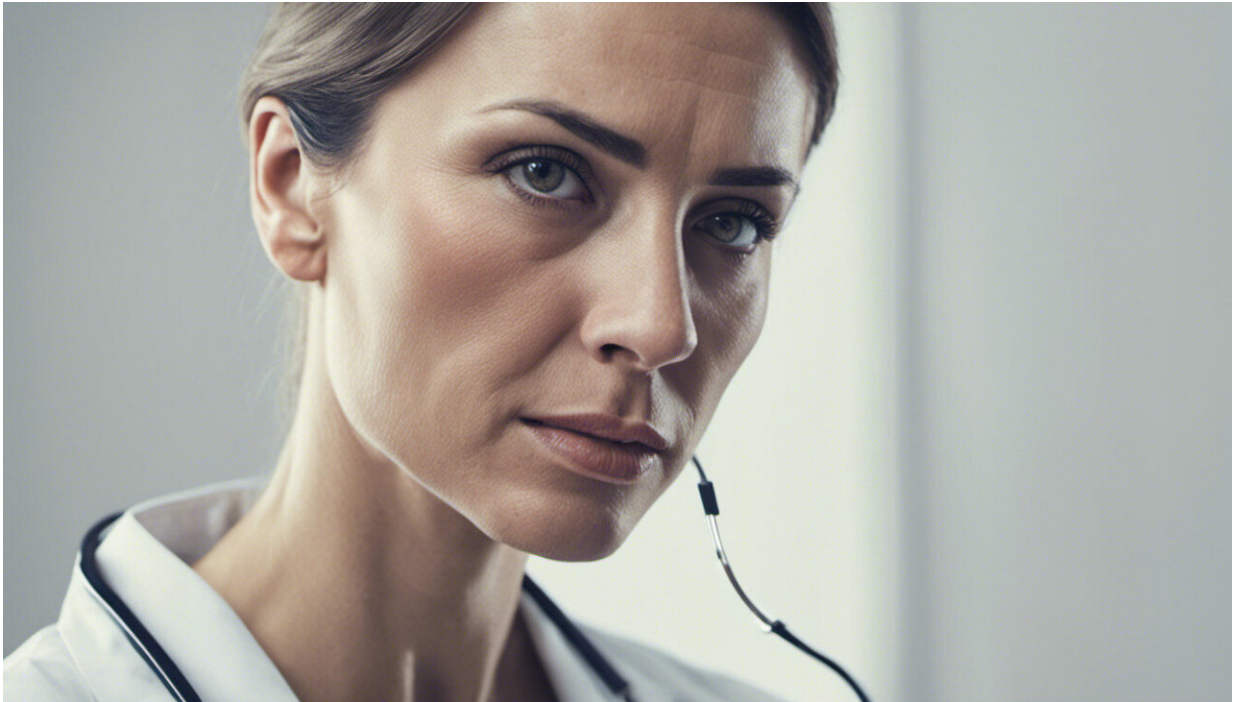


# Nurses advice key for anxious new parents

November 6 2015, by Carys Garland, Sciencenetwork Wa

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Nursing staff who cared for newborn preterm infants in hospital could provide follow-up advice for new parents—thereby alleviating their fears of caring for their child at home which could have harmful consequences on their future.

Researchers reviewed 12 studies about the experiences of [parents](#) caring for preterm infants—those delivered before the 37th week of

gestation—after discharge from Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) to determine how they deal with any challenges.

Parents feel comfort in the fact well-trained staff can help if anything happens to their newborn while in the NICU, ECU PhD candidate Esther Adama says, but it is a different story once they return home.

"Although parents are educated on the care of their babies before discharge, they are not very sure of their ability to care for the baby independently at home," she says.

"This results in anxiety following discharge."

Ms Adama says most parents tend to overprotect the baby because of its fragile nature, which can sometimes negatively impact the child later on in life such as placing it at increased risk of anxiety disorders.

"It can also inhibit learning and discovery of the child's potential and it may result in lack of self confidence among children," she says.

The study found parents' confidence in caring for their baby was increased with support from NICU nurses after they had been discharged.

"Our recommendation is if parents can be supported even after they leave the hospital, the NICU nurses will continue to call them and reassure them and tell them 'this is what you are doing and we want you to continue doing it'," Ms Adama says.

Parents who are anxious about caring for their [preterm children](#) at home may go so far as to not even wanting other people to hold their baby and generally being overprotective, Ms Adama says.

"This, we noted, has future consequences on their child's behaviour," she says.

Breastfeeding was identified as a comfortable way of making up for the baby's "hard time".

"By sacrificing to breastfeed despite the challenges of breastfeeding, mothers reported that they were compensating for their [babies'](#) lack of intra-uterine protection and nutrition," Ms Adama says.

The same nurses who attended to the parents in hospital should perform the follow-up support, rather than introducing different healthcare workers, she says.

**More information:** Esther Abena Adama et al. Parents' experiences of caring for preterm infants after discharge from Neonatal Intensive Care Unit: A meta-synthesis of the literature, *Journal of Neonatal Nursing* (2015). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jnn.2015.07.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnn.2015.07.006)

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