



Choosing to continue with pregnancy

Below are some things that you might need to know:

Appointments

Depending on your baby's diagnosis, your pregnancy may involve frequent appointments with doctors and specialists along with regular ultrasounds or other tests. You may need to visit the hospital many times. Due to these extra appointments, you and/or your family members may need to take extra time off work. Consider the options available to you in terms of sick leave, carer's leave, etc. You may also incur extra costs for things such as medical tests, travel, parking and loss of wages. If you have other children, you may need to arrange child care.

Things to look out for during pregnancy

During a high-risk pregnancy, it is important to look out for the key warning signs, such as fluid loss, blood loss, unusual or abnormal pain and signs of early labour. If you see these signs or if you are concerned, call your hospital's Pregnancy Assessment Unit number first, and they will decide upon the next point of treatment. Ask your medical professional to advise you if there are any specific signs that you should watch out for.

Later in the pregnancy, once you have started to feel foetal movements regularly, keeping a track of these movements is recommended. There are several apps that you can download, which allow you to monitor the foetal kicks digitally.

Possible early delivery

Depending on your baby's condition, you could be at a high risk of delivering early. Ask your medical team if there is anything that you can do to minimise the chances of an early labour (things such as bed rest, a cervical stitch or medication). If your baby is born early, your baby's gestation and weight will determine whether medical professionals need to intervene with medical help for your baby. If your baby is delivered early, they may be taken to NICU. In some cases, this can mean that you are not able to see your baby for several hours after delivery.

NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit)

NICU can be a very frightening and overwhelming place for parents. Your baby's specific condition will determine the length of stay. Before your baby is born, try to organise a tour and/or see if your hospital has information nights that you can attend. This is vitally important, so that you know where the NICU is, are familiar with the layout, and have had the opportunity to see babies that are there and see the machines that could possibly be used for your baby.

Once you have your baby and your baby is in NICU, don't be afraid to ask doctors and nurses questions. Also ask to assist in your baby's care as much as possible. This time can be extremely difficult for families, as you can feel as though you are unable to bond with your baby. It can be very frightening to see your baby hooked up to lots of machines.

NICU can be a rollercoaster of emotions, with high and lows. Going home without your baby can be extremely hard. If you have other children, there are other things to consider such as arranging childcare and feeling torn between wanting to be there for your children at home and your baby in NICU.

You may also find it beneficial to seek advice from a lactation consultant. If your baby can't feed and you need to express, some women find this difficult and frustrating, so it may be helpful to meet with a lactation consultant before your baby is born.

Palliative care

If you have chosen for your baby to go to palliative care after delivery, you may want to spend as much time with your baby as possible. Depending on your baby's condition, he or she may pass away quickly, or it could be several days, weeks or months. Talk to your medical team as to what facilities they have. Don't be afraid to personalise this environment. Maybe have a special outfit that you would like to put on your baby, or you might ask to bathe your baby. The options available to you will all depend on your baby's health.

Religion

Religion is a very personal choice. If you are religious, you may want to speak to your Pastor or religious leader to seek advice on any questions that you have. You also may want to have your own Pastor or religious leader to do a Baptism. Talk to your Pastor or religious leader to see if they would come to the hospital if needed.