



10

things to know
about the 1 in 10



Irish
**Neonatal
Health**
Alliance

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One out of every 10 babies born in the world will be born prematurely. Here in Ireland, there are approximately 4,500 babies born prematurely each year – that is one baby born prematurely every 116 minutes.

Advances in our understanding of how to care for these vulnerable babies means that more and more go on to live normal, healthy and happy lives.

Here are ten things to know that will help prepare you and your family if your baby is the 1 in 10.



1. Know your risk factors

Do you know the risk factors that can contribute towards a premature birth and do you know what you can do to reduce the chances of your baby arriving early? Risk factors include late maternal age, infection, obesity, multiple birth, previous miscarriage/preterm delivery etc. Familiarise yourself with the possible risks as early as possible.

2. Become an expert

If you have identified a possible risk factor, empower yourself with information. Education during a high risk pregnancy provides you with the tools to manage your pregnancy better and to prepare for the birth and aftercare of your baby. It's OK to ask questions no matter how trivial you may think they are.

3. You are your baby's primary caregiver

You are ALWAYS your baby's primary caregiver and an equal partner in his or her care giving team.

4. You are your baby's voice

Days and weeks spent at your baby's incubator means that you know your baby best and you are finely attuned to his or her cues and behaviour patterns. If you notice a change in your baby's medical condition or behaviour, always voice your concerns with the medical team.

5. Ask for a care pathway plan for your baby

Ask your baby's medical team to provide you with a *Care Pathway Plan* to learn the goals that your

baby will be expected to reach during his or her time in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. These goals may include breathing unaided, moving to an open cot and feeding goals.

6. Your premature baby needs breast milk

Evidence has shown that expressed breast milk is best for your premature baby as it reduces the risk of developing Necrotising Enterocolitis, a serious medical condition.

7. Prepare for the winter season

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major cause of respiratory illness in young children. Familiarise yourself with the symptoms, treatment and prevention measures of RSV.

8. Your baby's milestones are critical

Knowing your baby's expected milestones and when they ought to reach them will help you flag emerging developmental delays and seek intervention at the earliest possible opportunity.

9. Selfcare is essential

A premature birth has a ripple effect on the whole family - you will need emotional and practical support from your wider family, friends and support networks. You need to look after yourself too.

10. It wasn't your fault

Guilt is the most common emotion associated with a premature birth. Remember, it wasn't your fault and you did your best.



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To learn more about these 10 tips in addition to other useful information relating to healthy pregnancy, high risk pregnancy and premature birth, please visit www.inha.ie



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