

Heated Humidified High Flow Nasal Cannula (HHHFNC) Breathing Support

Information for Parents and Carers on the Neonatal Unit

Why you are receiving this leaflet

If your baby is receiving Heated Humidified High Flow Nasal Cannula (HHHFNC) breathing support, it is natural to have questions or feel worried. This leaflet explains what HHHFNC is, why it is used, what you may see on the neonatal unit, and how you can remain involved in your baby's care.

Our aim is to support both your baby and your family throughout their neonatal stay.

What is Heated Humidified High Flow Nasal Cannula (HHHFNC)?

HHHFNC is a type of breathing support used for babies who need extra help with their breathing or oxygen levels.

Warm, humidified air and oxygen are delivered through small, soft prongs that sit just inside your baby's nose. This gentle flow:

- Makes breathing easier
- Improves oxygen delivery
- Helps keep the airways open
- Reduces your baby's breathing effort

The air is warmed and humidified to protect your baby's delicate nose and lungs.

Why does my baby need HHHFNC?

Babies may need HHHFNC for several reasons, including:

- Prematurity (immature lungs)
- Lung infection or inflammation
- Episodes of low oxygen levels
- Breathing difficulties after birth
- Recovery after ventilation or CPAP

HHHFNC allows babies to receive breathing support while remaining as comfortable and settled as possible.

Every baby is different. The neonatal team will regularly review your baby's progress and adjust support as needed.

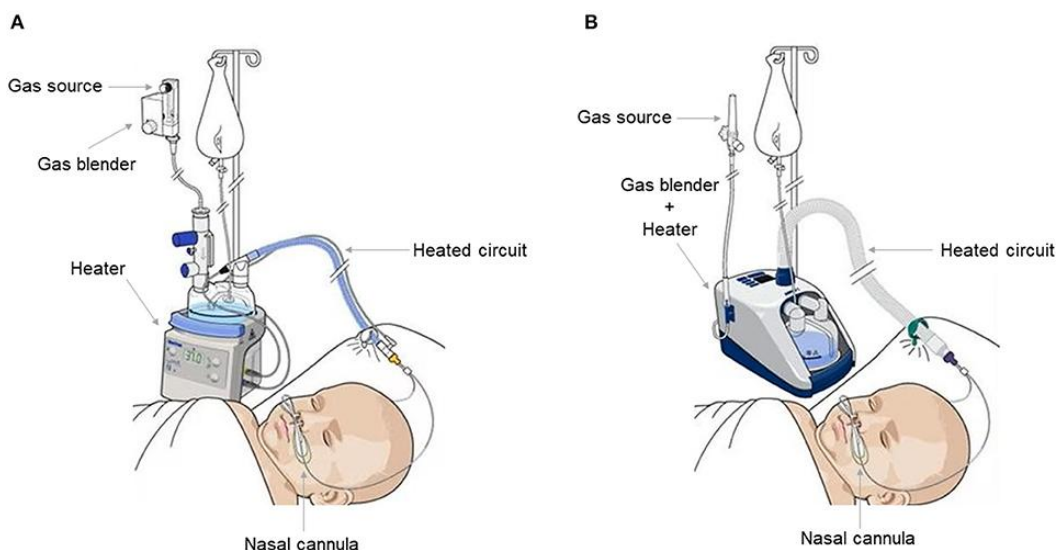
What will I see at my baby's cot side?

Seeing equipment around your baby can feel overwhelming at first. HHHFNC involves:

- Soft nasal prongs secured with gentle tape
- Tubing connected to a warming and humidifying machine
- Monitoring leads to track breathing, oxygen levels, and heart rate

You may hear a soft flowing sound — this is normal.

Your baby may still move, stretch, and respond to your voice and touch.



The neonatal team checks the equipment frequently to ensure it is working safely and comfortably.

Will HHHFNC hurt my baby?

HHHFNC should not be painful. Some babies may take a short time to settle when it is first started, which is normal.

Staff carefully position the prongs and regularly check your baby's skin to prevent irritation. Please tell a nurse if you notice redness or discomfort.

Can I still be involved in my baby's care?

Yes — your presence and involvement are very important. Please talk to the team looking after your baby regarding how you can be involved. Here are some examples:

- Skin to skin contact (kangaroo care)
- Take part in routine cares
- Support feeding plans
- Comfort and soothe your baby
- Talk or sing to your baby
- Ask questions

If you would like to be present and comfort your baby when HHHFNC is being started, you can. It is also ok to step away, if you feel this is the right thing for you. The team caring for your baby will make sure your baby will remain comfortable throughout the procedure.

What about feeding?

Breathing and feeding are closely linked and when breathing is affected this can impact feeding and swallowing. Your team will be able to advise you about whether or not your baby is able to do some oral feeding whilst on HHHFNC and if they are you will be seen by the Speech and Language Therapist who will be able to support you with how to do this. Your baby will still need their NGT during this time.

The speech and language therapist will assess and consider

- Your baby's developmental readiness
- Your baby's clinical presentation including their medical history and clinical stability (including their breathing effort)
- Why your baby needs HHHFNC and any plans for weaning

The team will discuss feeding options with you that are appropriate for your baby, and will review those with you regularly.

How will I know if my baby is improving?

Signs that your baby is getting better:

- Easier breathing
- Stable oxygen levels
- Less effort when breathing

As your baby gets better, HHHFNC support is gradually reduced. This happens at a pace that suits your baby.

If more support becomes necessary, the team will explain why and discuss the next steps with you.

What if I feel worried or overwhelmed?

Having a baby on a neonatal unit can be emotionally challenging. It is completely normal to feel anxious, tired, or unsure. We are here to support your whole family — not just your baby.

Please speak to the neonatal team if you need:

- More explanation
- Emotional support
- Practical guidance

We aim to always keep you informed about how your baby is doing in terms of their: progress, feeding, breathing support and care. All the questions that parents ask us, are taken very seriously. Please let us know, if we can help answer your questions.

When should I alert staff?

Tell a member of the nursing or medical team if you notice:

- Increased redness around the nose
- Your baby appearing uncomfortable
- Equipment concerns
- Anything that worries you

Further support

If you would like additional emotional or family support, please speak to staff.

Neonatal teams can arrange access to:

- Family support services
- Counselling
- Peer support groups

For more information regarding breathing support and much more, see:

<https://www.bliss.org.uk/parents/support>

