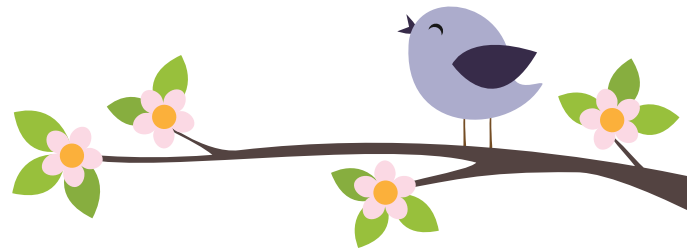


My baby is having episodes of apnea and bradycardia.

When will we be ready to go home?



Congratulations, your baby has come so far in her hospital course!

Your baby is progressing well towards her discharge goals, and she is now growing and developing a stronger body to breathe at all times and maintain a proper heart rate.

Premature babies, and even babies born near their due date, have immature body systems that need to continue to mature after birth. Sometimes these cause apnea or bradycardia. When babies are born prematurely, they often need help to remember to breathe and to bring up their heart rate. This can be done by gently stimulating the baby. Your baby is on a monitor that will alarm when she has forgotten to breathe or when her heart rate drops.

Apnea is when a baby's brain doesn't remind her to breathe, and there can be a pause in her breathing for several seconds.

Bradycardia is when the baby's heart beat slows, which is often caused by breathing pauses (apnea).

Apnea and bradycardia may have been treated earlier in your baby's course with a medication called caffeine. This acts to remind the baby's brain to breathe. Caffeine is often stopped around 34 weeks after she has stopped having these events. Babies are not discharged from the hospital when still receiving caffeine.

Once babies are medically stable, they have 3 goals to meet for discharge to home:

1. To take all feedings by mouth and gain appropriate weight
2. To maintain her temperature in a crib
3. To breathe safely and maintain heart rate on her own

The last milestone for your baby's hospital stay, breathing safely and keeping her heart rate stable, is determined by:

1. Watching your baby's breathing and heart rate for at least 7 days after the last dose of caffeine to make sure that she is safe without the medication. The NICU staff are watching for events of apnea or bradycardia that need intervention, such as stimulation.
2. Watching your baby for episodes of concerning apnea or bradycardia for at least 5-7 days before going home safely.

This part of your hospital stay can often feel like the most challenging. Sometimes, it can take weeks for a baby to be mature enough, even at or past their due date, to be free of apnea and bradycardia events and be safe enough to go home. The NICU team will discuss daily progress with you.