



In Utero Transfer (IUT)

An in utero transfer means moving your care to another hospital during pregnancy, before your baby is born.

Why would I need to be transferred?

Your doctor or midwife may recommend transfer to another hospital if:

- You are at risk of **very premature birth** (usually before 27–28 weeks)
- Your baby may need **specialist neonatal care**
- There are complications in your pregnancy that require a higher level of support
- The Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) at Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) is at capacity and cannot safely care for you and your baby

Transferring your care will mean that after birth your baby is cared for by a specialist team thereby lowering the risk of complications. It also allows you and your baby to be in the same hospital and avoid urgent transfer after birth.

What is Preterm Optimisation?

As well as transferring to a different hospital, there are evidence-based things we can do to help babies, born early or in need of specialist care, have the best start in life. We call this care pathway 'Preterm Optimisation'

1. Steroid injections may be given to you to help the baby's lungs develop
2. Antibiotics may be given to you to reduce the risk of infection to baby
3. Magnesium sulphate may be given to you to help protect baby's brain
4. Optimal cord clamping - which means not cutting the umbilical cord straight away which if safe to do so, can improve blood volume, iron levels and oxygen to baby
5. Keeping your baby warm can reduce the risk of them becoming unwell
6. Support with colostrum harvesting or early breastfeeding. The first milk you produce is called colostrum. You may have heard colostrum described as liquid gold- not just because it's yellow, but because it is the ideal nourishment for your baby in the first days of life. Colostrum is highly concentrated and packed with valuable nutrients that is like medicine for preterm babies. It can help to protect your baby's gut and contains antibodies that can help protect your baby from infection.

Where will I be transferred to?

If your baby requires specialist care you may be transferred to a hospital with a Level 3 Special Care Baby Unit. If we don't have the space to care for you or your baby you may be transferred to a different Level 2 hospital that has the same type of Special Care Baby Unit as the RBH. Your care team will recommend the most appropriate location based on availability and the needs of you and your baby.

How will the transfer happen?

- You will usually travel by **ambulance**
- A **midwife** will be with you at all times
- You and your baby will be **monitored during the journey**
- Your partner or family will need to travel separately.

Do I have a choice about where I am transferred to or can I stay at the RBH?

Your doctor or midwife will explain why a transfer is being recommended and discuss the risks and benefits.

Your informed consent is needed before transfer. This means you understand the risks if you choose not to transfer.

What happens when I get to the new hospital?

You will be admitted to the maternity unit at the new hospital. The team will reassess you and your baby and care will continue as planned including: monitoring, medications and planning for delivery if needed.

Not everyone transferred will give birth immediately. If your condition improves, you may stay at the hospital until you give birth, be transferred back to RBH or be discharged home if it is safe to do so. Once you are discharged from hospital, whether you have had your baby or are still pregnant, please inform your community midwife to ensure correct follow up and plan for further care.

Additional Resources

- Tommy's Preterm Birth Information: What is premature (preterm) birth? | Tommy's <https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/premature-birth>
- RBH Threatened Preterm Labour Leaflet: threatened-preterm-labour.pdf <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/media/olcppbra/threatened-preterm-labour.pdf>
- 3D Tours of the Neonatal Units: <https://neonatalnetworkssoutheast.nhs.uk/unit-information/>
- Bliss - <https://www.bliss.org.uk/>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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