

Maternity

# What happens if my baby is born too small to survive (less than 23 weeks)?

***The prevention and control of infection is a major Trust priority.***

***Please help us by observing the signs and reminders displayed around the Hospital and by asking staff:***

***"Have you cleaned your hands?" before they care for you.***

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## What happens if my baby is born too small to survive (less than 23 weeks)?

Sadly we expect your baby to be born when you are at 22 weeks of pregnancy or before. This means that your baby is not mature enough to survive. Baby's lungs have not grown enough to breathe, even if we use a ventilator / life support machine.

### What will my baby look like?

Compared to a baby born at the expected time, your baby will be very small and thin and his or her skin will be much darker. Your baby will be fully formed on the outside but baby's organs have not developed enough to keep him or her alive.

### Will my baby breathe or move?

If your baby survives labour he / she may show signs of life. This means that your baby could move, try to breathe or have a heart beat. These are signs that your baby is trying to survive but do not mean that your baby is strong enough to survive. The signs of life can go on for minutes or hours.

### How will you help my baby?

We will keep your baby comfortable. We would not use an incubator to keep the baby warm. We will treat your baby with dignity. Please tell us if you want your baby baptized or have any other religious ceremony.

### Can I see my baby?

Yes. We will ask you if you want to see your baby, cuddle him or her or spend time alone with them. Please tell us if you do not want to do any of these things.

### Can you tell me / us why my baby was born early?

Sometimes, but this may mean that we have to do further tests. We will discuss these tests with you. The tests we can do on the afterbirth (placenta) can be helpful. We can give you more information if we do a post-mortem on your baby. This is an option for you to consider. We will discuss this with you, but the final decision will be yours.

### Further Information/Support

Bereavement support/facilities will be made available to you and we encourage parents to access these.

Please do not hesitate to ask your midwife or doctor any questions.