

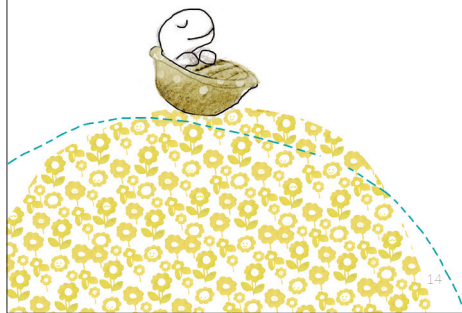
AT THE HOSPITAL



Endless corridors with wards and doors everywhere. People in white coats, monitors beeping, incubators and normal little beds. The sounds of strange devices. Other parents needing to release their emotions. In this confusing mish-mash of impressions, your child is born, much sooner than expected. Welcome to the hospital.

Born!

The intensive care, neonatology, cardiac monitoring,... Aside from a medical drama television show, you may never have seen these units up close before. However, this is the place where you will spend a lot of time in the coming weeks or months, because your child was born prematurely, maybe even extremely preterm.



→ → → Try to understand it

You're happy that your child is born. Maybe you're still a bit confused and you need more time to enjoy your child, especially when he or she is connected to all sorts of tubes and you're extremely worried.

Whatever your feelings at that moment, you will certainly have many questions and doubts about what will happen. Please remember this: most premature babies will be just fine. Ask around in your direct surroundings and you'll find that many people will tell you that they were preemies as well. In fact, it happens all too often.

But there's no time to talk this over just yet. Your child needs extra care. For now, you are expected to be strong, to think clearly, to make the right decisions and, most of all, to stay calm. Not really an easy task when your body is still recovering from pregnancy and childbirth and your mind is racing. The same goes for the brand new dad who is standing powerlessly on the sidelines, at least that's how it feels.

Take the time to get informed, to get to know the doctors and to take in, together with your partner or other people, what is going on. Your baby can develop extremely quickly and that can be complicated at times.

→ → → Take care of yourself

Whatever the condition of your baby, remember how well you have done. From a safe, unsuspecting environment, you've now been caught completely off guard in this situation. Perhaps, as a mother, you're plagued with guilt: Did I work too hard? Was it something I ate, did, or maybe even thought, that initiated the preterm birth? Did I miss signals that something was wrong? Why didn't I listen to my body and take time to rest? And as a father: Could I have done something? What happens next?

If these questions are going through your mind, the first step is to accept that the situation has changed and that there's nothing you