

DOES THE TYPE OF NEONATAL UNIT INFLUENCE THE BIRTH WEIGHT AND GESTATIONAL AGE OF LATE PRETERM INFANTS ADMITTED TO POST NATAL WARD AFTER BIRTH?

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Background: Infants born at 34⁺⁰ through 36⁺⁶ weeks gestation have been defined as 'late preterm' infants¹. It is not clear whether these babies can be managed on the post natal ward or routinely need to be admitted to the neonatal unit after birth.

Aim: To conduct national survey of admission practice for late preterm infants directly to Postnatal Ward (PNW) after birth.

Method: A structured telephone survey of all neonatal units in England.

Results: Out of the 184 neonatal units 180 responded (98%). Of the 4 non responders 2 were from Level 1, and one each from Level 2 and Level 3 units. The details of neonatal units, gestational age (GA) & B Wt limit for direct PNW admission after birth are presented in table 1. Significantly lower gestational age infants were admitted directly to PNW in level 2 units compared to Level 1 (p 0.03; CI 0.03-0.52) and Level 3 units compared to Level 2 (p 0.02; CI 0.028-0.211). Mean B Wt limit for direct PNW admission was significantly lower in Level 3 units compared to Level 1 (p 0.011; CI 0.028-0.211).

Type of Neonatal Unit	Number responded	Mean GA limit for direct PNW admission (SD)	Mean B Wt limit for direct PNW admission (SD)	Nursery nurse present
Level 1	49	35.19 (0.7) wks	1.99 (0.23) kg	17 (35%)
Level 2	84	34.91 (0.67) wks	1.94 (0.20) kg	32 (38%)
Level 3	47	34.61 (0.7) wks	1.87 (0.18) kg	23 (48%)

[Table 1: Gestational age & B Wt limit for direct PNW]

Conclusion: Type of neonatal unit influences the lower limit of B Wt and gestational age of late preterm infants admitted directly to PNW after birth.

Reference: 1)Engle et al. Pediatrics 2007.