
People You May See in the NICU

Your baby is in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit). This is a unit for newborns who need special care. Babies may be sent to the NICU if they are born too early, have problems during birth, or show problems in the first few days of life. The NICU is only for the care of very young infants.

Many of the people who help care for your baby in this unit are described below. They can help answer your questions and address your concerns.

Note

The NICU is also sometimes called the special care baby unit (SCBU).

Regular staff

These healthcare providers all give care in the NICU. Many are part of the daily routine in the unit. Some care for the whole unit in shifts. Others are specifically assigned to your baby's care.

- **RN (registered nurse).** Gives bedside nursing care and oversees other nurses.
- **LVN (licensed vocational nurse) or LPN (licensed practical nurse).** A nurse who provides care under an RN.
- **Patient care assistant.** A person who is trained to assist nurses in tasks, such as preparing human milk or formula for feeding, changing linens, and feeding babies.
- **Pediatrician.** A healthcare provider who treats babies and children.
- **Neonatologist.** A pediatrician who specializes in treating newborn babies.
- **Neonatal fellow.** A pediatrician in training to become a neonatologist.
- **Resident.** A healthcare provider training to become a pediatrician, family practice specialist, or other type of specialist.
- **Pharmacist.** A healthcare provider who specializes in medicine. They make sure your baby receives the right medicine in the correct amount and on schedule.
- **PA (physician assistant).** A provider trained to do many of the same tasks as doctors and who are supervised by the neonatologist or attending physician.
- **NP (nurse practitioner).** An advanced practice RN with specialized training in treating newborn babies.
- **Respiratory therapist.** Manages oxygen and breathing issues.
- **Lactation consultant.** Helps mothers and babies with breastfeeding.
- **Nutritionist or dietitian.** Keeps track of the nutritional status of your baby and advises with IV (intravenous) and enteral (milk) nutrition.
- **Physical or occupational therapist.** Helps improve a baby's movement and strength.

-
- **Speech therapist.** Helps with feeding issues (sucking and swallowing involve the same muscles used for speech).
 - **Social worker.** Helps with nonhealth issues. These include insurance, transportation, and support.

Specialists

Your baby may be seen by 1 or more specialists. These healthcare providers focus on the care and treatment of certain body systems. They often have special training in pediatrics as well.

- **Cardiologist:** Heart
- **Endocrinologist:** Glands and hormones
- **Gastroenterologist:** Digestive system
- **Geneticist:** Genetic (inherited) conditions
- **Hematologist:** Blood
- **Nephrologist:** Kidneys
- **Neurologist:** Brain and nervous system
- **Neurosurgeon:** Surgery of the brain and nervous system
- **Ophthalmologist:** Eyes
- **Pulmonologist:** Lungs
- **Urologist:** Urinary system and reproductive system
- **Surgeon:** Operates on different parts of the body, including the heart, organs in the abdomen, or urinary tract
- **ENT:** Operates on the ears, nose, and throat