

# Fathers in the NICU



Fathers have an important role in the life of their baby. When parents find themselves in the NICU after delivery, fathers often experience a wide range of emotions.

Most fathers believe their role is one of protector, partner and breadwinner. Suddenly these roles become difficult in the NICU. Fathers often struggle with feelings related to not being able to change or control the situation.

This can result in feelings of fear,  
anger, guilt, grief and helplessness.

In spite of being in the NICU there are several ways you can care for your family.

- **Spend time with your baby.** Learn about your baby's condition and get to know the staff caring for your infant. The more time you spend with your baby the more comfortable you will feel about the care being provided by hospital staff.
- **Ask Questions.** Fathers often feel out of the loop. Reach out to the medical team and ask questions about the treatment plan for your baby. Request information about resources that might provide needed assistance for your family.
- **Help make decisions about medical care.** Let your partner and medical care team know you want to be involved in decisions about your baby's medical care.
- **Touch and hold your baby.** Nothing provides better care for your baby than your physical presence and touch. Participate in diaper changes, bath time and kangaroo care. Read and sing to your baby.
- **Find support.** Sometimes just talking with other people about what you are going through can be very helpful. In addition to your friends and family, other NICU parents (past and present) can be a wonderful source of support because they have similar experiences. A NICU parent group is a great way to meet other parents and share stories.

**Contact us for more information about Mothers in the NICU or to  
connect with another NICU parent through our One-on-One Mentoring Program.**

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Caring for your family means caring for yourself as well. You cannot take care of your baby and partner if you are not first taking caring of yourself.

## Get Adequate Sleep:

- Getting adequate sleep, healthy food and regular exercise are important ways to replenish yourself and relieve some of the stress you may be feeling.

## Take a Break:

- You have many responsibilities right now. It is important for you to take time for yourself to do something that is enjoyable and relieves stress. Exercise, sports, hobbies or simply playing with your other children will help renew your energy and make it easier to cope with the situation you are facing.

## Find Support:

- Attend a support meeting for parents in the NICU. Establishing a network of other Fathers in your same situation, that you can relate to and talk to will help lighten your emotional load. No one understands what you are experiencing first hand than another NICU dad.

Use the space below to make notes of questions or issues that you would like to bring to the attention of the medical team.

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This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with a healthcare professional if you have any questions about the health of your baby.



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