

# My Baby's Lung Condition

Narrator

Respiratory problems are one of the most common problems babies admitted to the NICU might have.

Vedang Londhe, MD

The main criteria that most neonatologists use when determining when the baby is having respiratory distress is really how the baby is presenting clinically. We can usually look at a baby and have a good sense if the baby is working hard to breathe. In addition, the baby's respirations will give us a clue, the baby's color will give us a clue and the baby's oxygen saturation is often an important indicator that the baby is in respiratory distress.

Narrator

If a baby is having trouble breathing, there can be many potential causes.

Sue Hall, MD, Neonatologist

Babies in the NICU can have a variety of lung problems. Starting with the most premature baby, they usually have incomplete development of their lungs from an anatomic point of view, and as well they have surfactant deficiency.

Narrator

Lung issues, such as RDS, or Respiratory Distress Syndrome, caused by surfactant deficiency, are very common. Other conditions include: pneumothorax, or collapsed lung; TTN, or retained fetal lung fluid; and some babies may develop Chronic Lung Disease, or BPD, over time. Many babies will need help breathing during their stay and that might mean they will need assistance from a ventilator.

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Babies that come to our unit for respiratory issues may have to be on the ventilator because they're not breathing on their own or they need help, or just regular oxygen care because they need a little boost to start. They may need blood drawn for to measure their oxygen concentration in the blood to see how they're doing.

Narrator

There are also other ways to help your baby breathe.

Vedang Londhe, MD

The methods that we use to help a baby breathe include either use of a ventilator or another apparatus known as a CPAP machine, which stands for continuous positive airway pressure. And what determines whether a baby needs a ventilator or a CPAP is basically the amount of respiratory distress that the baby is in.

Narrator

Other smaller tubes might also be used to assist breathing, such as a nasal cannula. Doctors might use medication, too, especially surfactant, which is given directly into babies lungs to help them expand. Remember to always ask your baby's doctors if you want to know more about your baby's condition. They will be glad to help.