

When your baby needs intensive care

Like most parents, you were expecting a healthy baby who would go home with you in a few days. Instead, your baby was taken to the NICU or a special care nursery. The NICU is the place in the hospital where some newborns go for medical care.

Babies go to the NICU because they were born:

- Prematurely, before 37 weeks of pregnancy
- With birth defects. Birth defects are health conditions that are present at birth. They change the shape or function of one or more parts of the body. Birth defects can cause problems in overall health, how the body develops or how the body works.
- With other medical problems like an infection or a condition in which they need surgery



All babies in the NICU need medical care and staff to check on them 24 hours a day.

Parents have very mixed feelings when their baby is in the NICU. They may be happy to welcome their baby, but also worried and overwhelmed about what will happen. These feelings are shared by many NICU parents. The NICU health care providers (also called providers) are here for your baby, and you and your family.

If a dad, partner or family member gets to the NICU first

Many times a dad, partner or family member is the first to arrive at the NICU, while the baby's mom is still recovering. Find out as much information as you can about your baby's care to share with the baby's mother. Because of privacy laws, hospital staff may have to check with the baby's mother before sharing information with you.

Here are some questions you can ask:

- What are my baby's main problems right now?
- What can I do to help my baby?
- Can I take a picture of my baby?
- Do you have any information that I can give to my baby's mother?

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