

# Words to know

**adjusted age** (uh-JUHS-ted age) — The age of the baby based on his due date. It's the date that health care providers may use to decide if the baby is growing and developing in a healthy way.

**advocate** — Someone who speaks up for something or someone who is not able to do this for themselves. Also means to speak, write or stand up for something or someone.

**antibiotics** (AN-tee-bye-yah-tix) — Medicines that kill certain infections.

**antibodies** (AN-tee-bah-deez) — Cells in the body that fight off infections.

**apnea** (AP-nee-uh) — When a baby stops breathing for more than 15 seconds.

**apnea monitor** (AP-nee-uh MON-uh-tur) — A machine that detects when the baby stops breathing for a few seconds. An alarm goes off to let you know the baby stops breathing.

**arterial line** — A thin tube that goes into your baby's artery to check his blood pressure and measure blood gases. An artery is a blood vessel that carries oxygen to all parts of your baby's body. Blood pressure is the force of blood that pushes against the walls of the arteries. Blood gases are acid, oxygen and carbon dioxide in your baby's blood.

**arteries** (AR-tuh-reez) — Blood vessels that carry oxygen to all parts of the body.

**baby blues** — Feelings of sadness in the first few days after having a baby.

**BAER** — Also called brainstem auditory evoked response test. A hearing test for newborns.

**bili lights** (BIL-ee lites) — Bright lights over a baby's incubator that treat jaundice. An incubator is a clear plastic bed that keeps your baby warm. Jaundice is when a baby's eyes and skin look yellow. A baby has jaundice when his liver isn't fully developed or isn't working. Treatment with bili lights is also called phototherapy. Babies can have this treatment for 3 to 7 days.

**birth defects** — 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.

**blood pressure** — The force of blood that pushes against the walls of your arteries. Arteries are blood vessels that carry blood away from your heart to other parts of the body.

**blood pressure monitor** — A machine connected to a small blood pressure cuff wrapped around your baby's arm or leg. The cuff takes your baby's blood pressure at regular times and displays it on a screen. Blood pressure is the force of blood that pushes against the walls of the arteries.

**breastfeeding peer counselor** — A mom who breastfed her own children and wants to help and support other mothers who breastfeed. She has had some training to help women breastfeed, but not as much as a lactation consultant.

**cardiopulmonary monitor** (kar-dee-oh-PUHLmuh-nair-ee MON-uh-tur) — A machine that tracks your baby’s heart and breathing rates. It’s connected to your baby’s chest with small sticky pads called leads. Information from the monitor displays on a screen and can be printed out. If your baby’s heart or breathing rate becomes too fast or too slow, an alarm sounds.

**case manager** — A person who may oversee a baby’s discharge from the hospital, help set up home care services and supplies and follow up with families about insurance coverage for their baby’s NICU stay.

**CAT scan or CT scan** — Also called computed tomography scan. A test that takes pictures of the inside of the body. It’s like an X-ray, but it gives a clearer, three dimensional (also called 3D) view. Your baby goes to the radiology department for the test. She may need medicine to help keep her still during the test.

**catheter** (KATH-uh-tur) — A thin plastic tube through which fluids are given or taken from the body.

**central line** — A small plastic tube that goes into a large blood vessel. Your baby gets medicine and fluids through the tube, and providers can draw blood out through the tube. One kind of central line that’s used a lot is called a peripherally inserted central catheter (also called a PICC line).

**chaplain** — A person who provides spiritual support.

**charge nurse** — The nurse who’s responsible for making the NICU run well, including scheduling NICU staff. The charge nurse admits your baby to and discharges your baby from the NICU.

**child life specialist** — A trained professional who helps children and their families during challenging events. Child life specialists can help older children if they have a brother or sister in the NICU.

**chronological age** (kron-uh-LOJ-uh-kuhl age) — This is the age of the baby from the day of his birth: the number of days, weeks or years old he is.

**cleft lip** (kleft lip) — A birth defect in which a baby’s upper lip doesn’t form completely and has an opening in it.

**cleft palate** (kleft PAL-it) — A birth defect in which the roof of the baby’s mouth doesn’t form completely and has an opening in it.

**clinical nurse specialist** — Also called CNS. A nurse with special training to care for children and their families. The CNS teaches parents about their baby’s health condition.

**colostrum** (kuh-LAH-strum) — A clear, sticky liquid that comes out of a mother’s breasts soon after she gives birth and before her breast milk comes in. It’s food for the baby and helps protect him from infection. Her body starts making it during the last few months of pregnancy.

**containment hold** — This is a way to hold a baby. It’s done by placing one hand lightly on the baby’s head and the other hand on the baby’s tummy or cupping her feet gently.

**CPAP** — Also called continuous positive airway pressure. A machine that sends air and oxygen to your baby’s lungs through small tubes in his nose or windpipe (also called trachea) to help her breathe.

**continuous positive airway pressure** — See CPAP.

**cues** — Signals about how a baby feels and what she needs.

**dehydration** (dee-hye-DRAY-shun) — A condition that occurs when the baby is losing more fluids than he's taking in.

**depression** — A medical condition in which strong feelings of sadness last for a long time and interfere with daily life. It needs treatment to get better.

**developmental delay** — A serious delay in a baby or child's physical, mental, behavioral or social development. For example, a baby may have a developmental delay if he's unable to roll over or sit up at a certain age.

**developmental follow-up program** — A team of health care providers who make sure babies are meeting milestones.

**developmental milestones** — A skill or activity that most children can do at a certain age. Milestones include sitting, walking, talking, having social skills and having thinking skills.

**diagnosis** (dye-uhg-NOH-siss) — Health problem(s) or condition(s) that the baby has.

**diabetes** (dye-uh-BEE-teez) — A condition in which there is too much sugar in the blood.

**discharge** — When a baby leaves the NICU and goes home or to a step-down unit.

**discharge class** — A class for NICU parents. They attend the class before their baby is sent home. It covers topics such as car seat safety, basic baby care, safe sleep, medications and follow-up care.

**discharge summary** — A report prepared by a health care provider that states what happened in the NICU and what treatment the baby may need after the NICU.

**early intervention programs** — Programs that provide services for babies and children who have developmental delays and/or more chance of having developmental delays than other babies.

**echocardiogram** (ek-oh-KAR-dee-oh-gram) — Also called an echo or a cardiac ultrasound. An ultrasound is used to take pictures of and study the heart.

**endotracheal tube** (en-doh-TREY-kee-uhl toob) — A small plastic tube that is placed down the baby's windpipe and sends air and oxygen to the lungs.

**esophagus** (i-SOF-uh-guhss) — The part of the body that carries food from the throat to the stomach.

**exchange transfusion** (eks-CHANJ tranz-FYOO-zhuhn) — A special type of blood transfusion where a baby's blood is removed little by little and replaced with donor blood. It is used to treat jaundice.

**family physician** (FAM-uh-lee FUH-zish-uhn) — A doctor who takes care of people of all ages.

**family support coordinator** — A person who provides information, help and comfort to families when their baby is in the NICU.

**follic acid** (FOH-lik ASS-id) — A vitamin that can help protect a baby from some birth defects.

**formula** — A milk product that can be fed to a baby instead of breast milk.

**full-term baby** — A baby born between 39 weeks and 40 weeks, 6 days of pregnancy.

**G-tube** — See gastrostomy tube.

**gastric feeding tube** — See gastrostomy tube.

**gastrostomy tube** (gass-TRAWSS-tuh-mee toob) — Also called a G-tube or gastric feeding tube. A tube that goes into a baby's stomach for feeding. Liquids, like breast milk and formula, are put into the tube to feed the baby.

**gavage feeding** (guh-VAHZH FEED-eeng) — When a baby is fed through a small tube placed through the nose or mouth to the stomach.

**group B streptococcus** (groop bee streptoh-KOK-uhs) — An infection that a woman passes to her baby during birth. If a woman is positive for Group B strep she will get antibiotics while she is in labor that may protect the baby from getting the infection.

**hand sanitizer** — A liquid used on hands to kill germs without using water.

**hand swaddling** — See containment hold.

**health care provider** — Also called provider. The person who gives medical care.

**health care team** — A group of health care providers who work together to care for a baby.

**hearing test** — Also called brainstem auditory evoked response test or BAER. This test checks your baby's hearing. A provider places a tiny earphone in your baby's ear and puts small sensors on his head. The provider plays sounds through the earphones, and the sensors send information to a machine that measures your baby's response to the sounds. All babies get this test as part of newborn screening.

**human milk fortifier** — A liquid or powder added to breast milk. It has important nutrients to help your baby grow.

**IFSP** — See Individual Family Service Plan.

**immune system** — Protects your body from infection.

**incubator** (IN-kyoo-bay-tur) — A clear plastic bed that helps keep your baby warm. You can touch your baby through holes (also called ports) in the sides of the incubator. Kinds of incubators are Giraffe® and Isolette®.

**Individual Family Service Plan** — Also called IFSP. This is a plan for special services for babies and young children with developmental delays.

**infant CPR** — A procedure that is done when a baby's breathing or heartbeat has stopped.

**infection** — An illness caused by some viruses, bacteria or other germs.

**IUGR** — Also called intrauterine growth restriction. A term for babies who are smaller than they should be while still in the uterus.

**in-home nursing care** — When a nurse comes to a family's home and provides medical care to the baby.

**intravenous feeding** (in-truh-VEE-nuhs feed-EENG) — When a baby is fed through a thin plastic tube that is placed in a vein in the baby's hand, foot, scalp or belly button.

**intravenous line** (in-truh-VEE-nuhs line) — Also called IV. A tube inserted with a needle into your baby's vein. A vein is a blood vessel that brings blood back to the heart. Your baby can get fluids, medicine and blood through an IV.

**IV** — See intravenous line.

**kangaroo care** — Also called skin-to-skin care. Putting a baby dressed only in a diaper on his parent's bare chest.

**lactation consultant** (lak-TAY-shuhn kuhn-SUHL-tuhnt) — A person with special training to help women breastfeed.

**lipids** (LIH-pids) — Fats needed by most babies.

**mechanical ventilator** (muh-KAN-uh-kuhl VEN-tuh-lay-tur) — Also called a respirator. Gives the baby carefully controlled breaths. These can range from a few extra breaths a minute to entirely taking over the work of breathing.

**meconium** (muh-KOH-nee-uhm) — A baby's first bowel movement. It can be green, black or brown in color.

**medical geneticist** — A doctor who has special training to care for people birth defects and genetic conditions.

**medical rounds** — A practice in the NICU where a medical team walks from baby to baby talking about their care and treatment. The medical team may include doctors, nurses, therapists, pharmacists and social workers. The medical team talks about a baby at her bedside.

**microgram** (mye-KRUH-grahm) — An amount of something, such as the amount of folic acid in a vitamin pill.

**MRI** — Also called magnetic resonance imaging. A medical test that makes a detailed picture of the inside of your body.

**nasal cannula** (NAY-suhl KAN-yoo-luh) — Small plastic tubes that go into your baby's nose to help him breathe. Air and oxygen go through the tubes into your baby's lungs.

**nasogastric tube** (NAY-zoh-gass-trik toob) — Also called NG tube. A feeding tube that goes through your baby's nose, down the esophagus and into the stomach. The esophagus is the tube in your baby's body that carries food from the throat to the stomach. Your baby can get breast milk, formula and medicine through the tube. When your baby is fed breast milk or formula through an NG tube, it's called gavage feeding.

**neonatal nurse practitioner** — Also called NNP. A nurse with special training to take care of sick babies. The NNP works with the baby's neonatologist, can do some medical procedures and may direct your baby's care.

**neonatal physician assistant** — Also called PA. A health care provider who has special medical training to take care of sick newborns. The PA works with the neonatologist, performs medical procedures and may direct your baby's care.

**neonatologist** — A pediatrician who has special medical training to take care of sick newborns and may direct your baby's care.

**neonatology fellow** — A pediatrician who is getting additional medical training to take care of sick newborns.

**newborn screening test** — Checks for serious but rare and mostly treatable conditions at birth. It includes blood, hearing and heart screening.

**NG tube** — See nasogastric tube.

**NICU** — Also called the neonatal or newborn intensive care unit. The place in the hospital where newborns go for special care.

**nipple shield** — A piece of soft, thin plastic that fits over the nipple. It has holes in it that let milk flow to the baby.

**non-nutritive sucking** (nahn-NU-tri-tiv SUHKeeng) — Sucking that a baby does but not for feeding. A baby can suck at his mom's breast or suck his thumb, fingers or a pacifier.

**nursing change of shift** — Also called nursing report. At the end of a shift, the baby's nurse meets with the next nurse who is going to care for the baby. They discuss the baby's care.

**nursing report** — See nursing change of shift.

**nutrients** (NU-tree-entz) — Nutrients, like vitamins and minerals, help the body grow and stay healthy.

**occupational therapist** — Also called OT. A health care provider who helps figure out how well a baby feeds and swallows, and how well he moves his arms and legs.

**nursing report** — See nursing change of shift.

**OG tube** — See orogastric tube.

**open adoption** — A form of adoption in which the birth and adoptive families have some access to each other's personal information and may contact each other.

**ophthalmologist** (op-thuhl-MOL-uh-jist) — A doctor who has special medical training in the care of eyes and vision.

**orogastric tube** (OR-oh-gass-trik toob) — Also called OG tube. A feeding tube that goes in your baby's mouth, down the esophagus and into the stomach. The esophagus is the tube in your baby's body that carries food from the throat to the stomach. Your baby can get breast milk, formula and medicine through an OG tube. When a baby is fed breast milk or formula through an OG tube, it's called gavage feeding.

**oxygen hood** — A clear plastic box that fits over a baby's head and gives him oxygen. Providers use it with babies who can breathe on their own but still need some extra oxygen.

**patient care assistant** — Also called PCA. A NICU staff member who helps nurses do things like change bed sheets, feed babies and prepare bottles.

**pediatric cardiologist** (pee-dee-AT-rik kar-dee-OL-uh-jist) — A doctor who has special medical training in the care of a baby's or child's heart.

**pediatric gastroenterologist** (pee-dee-AT-rik gas-troh-enter-OL-uh-jist) — A doctor who has special medical training to take care of a baby's or child's digestive system. The digestive system is made up of organs and tubes that digest (break down) food a baby eats.

**pediatric neurologist** (pee-dee-AT-rik nur-OL-uh-jist) — A doctor who has special medical training to care for a baby's or child's brain and spinal cord. The spinal cord is a bundle of nerves that carries signals between the brain and the body.

**pediatric pulmonologist** (pee-dee-AT-rik puhl-moh-NOL-uh-jist) — A doctor who has special medical training to care for a baby's or child's lungs

**pediatrician** (pee-dee-uh-TRI-shuhn) — A doctor who has special training in taking care of babies and children.

**pertussis** (pur-TUSS-iss) — See whooping cough.

**pharmacist** — A person who has special training in how medicines work and the side effects they may cause. People get prescription medicine from the pharmacist. Pharmacists also provide medicines in the hospital.

**phototherapy** (foh-toh-THER-uh-pee) — Treatment for jaundice with special lights, called bili lights. With some types of phototherapy, the baby wears shields to protect the eyes.



**physical therapist** — Also called PT. A health care provider who looks at any movement problems a baby has and how they may affect the baby sitting, rolling over or walking. The PT helps improve a baby's muscle strength and coordination.

**plugged ducts** — When breast milk gets blocked in a woman's breast ducts.

**postpartum checkup** (pohst-PAR-tuhm CHEK-up) — A medical checkup a mom gets about 6 weeks after she has a baby to make sure she's recovering well from labor and birth.

**postpartum depression** (pohst-PAR-tuhm dee-PRESH-shuhn) — Also called PPD. A kind of depression that some women get after having a baby. Women with PPD have strong feelings of sadness that last a long time. These feelings can make it hard to take care of her baby. It needs treatment to get better.

**PPD** — See postpartum depression.

**premature birth** — When a baby is born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

**primary nursing** — The practice of having the same nurses take care of the baby on most days.

**projectile vomiting** (pruh-JEK-tile VOM-iteng) — When a baby vomits with a lot of force.

**provider** — See health care provider.

**PTSD** — Also called post-traumatic stress disorder. A severe form of anxiety. PTSD may happen when you go through something shocking, scary or dangerous.

**pulse oximeter** (puhlss OK-sym-ee-tur) — Also called a pulse ox. A small device wrapped around your baby's foot or hand that measures the oxygen in her blood. It doesn't cause your baby any pain. It helps providers know if your baby needs more or less oxygen.

**radiant warmer** (RAY-dee-uhnt WARM-ur) — An open bed with overhead heating to help keep your baby warm. Providers may use a warmer instead of an incubator if your baby needs to be handled a lot. An incubator is a clear plastic bed that helps keep your baby warm.

**RDS** — Also called respiratory distress syndrome. A serious breathing problem that affects mainly premature babies. These babies need help breathing.

**reflux** (REE-fluks) — Also called GER or gastroesophageal reflux. A feeding problem that happens when food in the baby's stomach comes back up during or after a feeding.

**registered dietitian** — Also called RD. A health care provider who is trained as an expert in nutrition. The RD works with the NICU staff to help make sure babies get all the nutrients they need. Nutrients, like vitamins and minerals, help the body stay healthy.

**registered nurse** — Also called RN. An RN in the NICU has special training in caring for sick newborns.

**resident** — A doctor who is getting training in a medical specialty. For example, a pediatric resident is getting training to become a pediatrician.

**respiratory syncytial virus** (ress-puh-rah-TOR-ee SIN-sish-uhl VYE-ruhss) — Also called RSV. A common virus that most children have before the age of 2. It can cause a serious illness for babies born too early or who have heart or lung problems.

**respiratory therapist** — Also called RT. A health care provider who cares for babies with breathing problems.

**rooting** — When the baby turns her head toward anything that strokes her cheek or mouth.

**RSV** — See respiratory syncytial virus.

**sepsis** (SEP-siss) — An infection of the blood.

**SIDS** — See sudden infant death syndrome.

**skin-to-skin care** — See kangaroo care.

**social smile** — When the baby smiles in response to something, such as when she's hugged or someone smiles at her.

**social worker** — A person who is trained to help families cope with their baby's NICU stay. A social worker can give families emotional support and help them get information about their baby's medical condition and NICU care. They also help families find resources and services to help them care for their baby, help families work with insurance companies and help them plan for when their baby comes home.

**special care nursery** — Intermediate level of care for babies who need to be watched closely by medical staff. Sometimes called a step-down nursery or progressive nursery.

**speech and language therapist** — A health care provider who has training to help people with speech and language problems. In the NICU, this therapist often helps newborns with feeding problems.

**step-down unit** — Intermediate care for babies who need to be watched closely by medical staff. This may be a Level II NICU.

**sudden infant death syndrome** — Also called SIDS. The unexplained death of a baby while sleeping.

**support group** — A group of people who have the same kinds of concerns. They meet online or in person to try to help each other.

**surfactant** (sur-FAK-tuhnt) — A liquid that coats the inside of the lungs to help them work properly. It helps keep the lungs open so an infant can breathe in air once he or she is born. It can be used as a drug to prevent respiratory distress syndrome (RDS).

**swaddle** — A safe way to wrap the baby in a blanket. This is when the baby is wrapped in a thin blanket so that it covers most of her body below the neck.

**syndrome** (SIN-droh-m) — A group of symptoms that happen together and indicate a medical condition. Down syndrome and respiratory distress syndrome are examples.

**tachycardia** (tak-ee-KAR-dee-uh) — A heart rate that is too fast.

**Tdap vaccine** — A vaccine which offers protection from three serious diseases including pertussis (also called whooping cough).

**technician** — A person who's trained to do things like take blood or X-rays. An x-ray is a test that uses small amounts of radiation to take pictures of the inside of the body.

**total parenteral nutrition** (toe-TAL pa-RENter-ull new-TRI-shuhn) — When a baby gets all of his nutrition through an IV. The IV solution will provide the baby with all or most of his calories and nutrients.

**TPN** — See total parenteral nutrition.



**transport team** — A team of health care providers who move babies from one hospital to another.

**tummy time** — When a baby is placed on his tummy to help his muscle development.

**ultrasound** (UHL-truh-sound) — A test that uses sound waves to take pictures of the inside of the body.

**urine test**—Tests a baby’s urine for certain health conditions. Urine test results can tell providers a lot about your baby’s overall condition. For example, test results can tell provider if your baby’s getting enough fluid, how your baby’s kidneys are working and if your baby has an infection. Your baby’s provider inserts a thin tube called a urinary catheter in the opening where urine passes out of your baby’s body to collect the urine.

**vaccination** (vak-suh-NAY-shuhn) — A shot that contains a vaccine that helps protect against certain diseases.

**vein** — A blood vessel that brings blood back to the heart.

**vitamin supplement** — A product you take to make up for certain nutrients that you don't get enough of in the foods you eat. It can be a multivitamin (a pill that contains many vitamins that help your body stay healthy), a prenatal vitamin (a multivitamin that has nutrients you need during pregnancy) or a supplement that contains just one nutrient, like folic acid.

**warmer** — See radiant warmer.

**whooping cough** — Also called pertussis. An infection that spreads easily and is very harmful to a baby. Babies and adults can get a vaccine to protect them from pertussis and prevent spreading it to others.

**X-ray** — A test that uses small amounts of radiation to take pictures of the inside of the body. X-rays provide pictures of a baby’s lungs and other organs.

## Notes