

Family and friends in the NICU

Your baby's NICU stay may also impact members of your family, like your older children and your parents, and friends. They may be sad, worried and may show these emotions in many ways. It's important to be open and honest with people about what you need during this time.

How friends and family members can help

Because this is such a stressful time in your life, it's really important to get help from others. It may not be easy for you to ask for help, but many people want to help. They just don't always know how.

Here are some ideas of how friends and family can help you. They can:

- Bring a meal to you and your family
- Pack snacks for you to eat at the hospital
- Do your grocery shopping
- Help with your older children
- Do laundry or clean your home
- With your OK, share updates about your baby through blogs, email or social media
- Drive you to and from the hospital
- Go with you to meetings at the hospital and take notes. These meetings can be with your baby's health care team, the NICU social worker or hospital financial staff.
- Sit with your baby in the NICU so that you can take a break, if the NICU allows visitors to be with your baby without you there.

If you have more than one baby in different rooms in the NICU, ask a friend or family member to help you out. Each of you can be with one baby.

Grandparents in the NICU

Your baby's grandparents have their own unique experience in the NICU. They may feel joy over their grandchild's birth but also may worry about his health. They also may be worried about how you and your partner are dealing with the baby's stay in the NICU. As a parent and a grandparent, they have a very important role during this time.



Common emotions of grandparents

Grandparents may have mixed feelings after their grandchild is born. They may feel:

- Concerned about your baby's medical condition
- Angry about the difficulties you and your baby are facing
- Worried about how everyone in the family is coping
- Frustrated by not being able to help or ease your family's distress
- Pride and joy over the latest addition to your family

Talking to your child's grandparents

Talking openly with your child's grandparents may reduce your stress during your baby's NICU stay. It may also help your child's grandparents understand more about what you need during this time. Here are some things you can talk about:

- **Tell them that you and your partner need time alone with your baby.** But let them know when there is a good time for them to come to the NICU to spend time with their grandchild. You may feel more comfortable leaving the NICU if a trusted family member stays with your baby. Check with the NICU staff to make sure grandparents can be with your baby while you're not there.
- **Share your feelings and be patient with each other.** Share how you're coping with your baby's NICU stay and talk with them about their feelings too. All members of the family are under stress and may sometimes be overwhelmed and short-tempered.

- **Give them ideas of how they can help you.** Grandparents may want to help, but may not know how. Their support outside of the NICU is just as important as inside the NICU. Whether they live nearby or far away, grandparents can do lots of things to help your family while your baby's in the NICU. See the list on the previous page for ways they can help.

"When Olivia arrived very early, there was so much fear and confusion. Once she was in the NICU things calmed down, but then I realized I wasn't sure of my role. It was a relief when the staff treated me like part of Olivia's support system. It meant a lot to me that as Olivia's grandmother, I didn't have to introduce myself each time I went to the hospital or explain how much I cared."

SHEREE

GRANDMOTHER OF A PREMATURE BABY

MORE INFORMATION

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Notes
