

Adoptive families

Adopting a baby can be overwhelming. It's a long process with a lot of ups and downs. You may not have thought about what would happen if the baby you are hoping to adopt has medical problems. Having a baby in the NICU is challenging, but the added stress of going through an adoption can make it even harder.

Here are some tips to help you and your family move through the adoption process while your baby is in the NICU:

Find support.

Talk to your adoption agency or adoption lawyer. Find out if they can connect you with a family who has gone through the same things that you are going through.

Make a plan with the birth parents.

- Each state has different adoption laws. In some states, the child's birth parents may keep parental rights for a period of time after the baby's birth. If this is the case, you may not be able to make medical and other decisions for the baby you plan to adopt. If you have an open adoption, there are some things you may want to discuss with your child's birth parents:
- Can we visit the baby in the NICU?
- Will we be with the baby at the same time as you? Or will we be with the baby at a different time?
- Who will make medical decisions and who will be called in case of an emergency?
- What roles will everyone have regarding the baby's care, including holding, feeding or doing kangaroo care?

Your adoption agency or lawyer can help you work with the birth parents to answer these questions. Be sure to let the NICU staff know the plans you make.

If you have an open adoption, the NICU stay may extend the amount of time the birth parents have with the baby before they say goodbye. Give the birth parents privacy to take pictures or have their family meet the baby before saying goodbye. This can help bring closure for everyone.

“Our family was built through adoption, and Josh — our youngest — is a NICU graduate. We weren't able to meet Josh until after his time in the NICU, but we have photos of the nurses holding him and giving him love and attention during the 2 months he was in their care. When Josh left the hospital, he was sent to his foster care home with stuffed animals, books and blankets. He finally came to live with us when he was 5 months old and has been a wonderful addition to our family.

We will always be grateful to the people who cared for Josh before he was our son. They helped him thrive when there was no one there to advocate for him and gave him the very best start in life.”

JANELLE

ADOPTIVE MOM OF A PREMATURE BABY

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