

# Caring for Yourself While Your Baby Is in the NICU

You may have expected that having a newborn would be challenging.

But nothing prepares you for what it feels like to have a baby in the neonatal intensive care unit, called N-I-C-U or NICK-yoo.

So many feelings can come up for you. Fear, worry, being so tired, and you may feel like you shouldn't or don't want to leave your baby.

If you're stressed and running low on energy, you're more likely to get sick.

That's why it's important to recharge by taking the time to care for yourself.

Now, the NICU experience may not be like anything else you've ever been through.

But still, it may help to think about what or who has gotten you through other trying times in your life.

It's okay if you can't think of anything specific.

Maybe learning what worked for other parents could help you find ways to take care of yourself.

Here are a few things you could try: It might help to talk to a close friend about whatever you're feeling.

Sometimes just saying things out loud can make you feel less alone.

Or try keeping a journal to express your thoughts and feelings.

Nobody in your situation can do it all.

It's okay to ask for help with errands or with things that need to get done at home.

Ask a trusted friend to be your spokesperson, someone who can make phone calls for you or set up a care calendar to schedule things like delivering meals.

Other parents with babies in the NICU have discovered that it helped them to take time to recharge.

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If you have a daily routine such as eating dinner each night at home, taking walks, and getting the sleep you need, you'll be more likely to come back to the NICU refreshed and ready to help your baby.

The NICU team is there to care for your baby, but even the staff works in shifts.

So you need breaks too.

When you're rested and kind to yourself, you can give your baby your very best.