





Welcome to the NICU,

Congratulations on the birth of your baby. A baby's arrival can be both exciting and stressful. When the events surrounding your baby's birth have required for them to be admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), you play an important role in caring for and bonding with your baby.



Our NICU team is here to assist you by taking excellent care of your baby and helping you participate in your baby's early days of life.



We have prepared this booklet to prepare you for what to expect in the NICU and to orient you to our team. You are an important part of that team and you play an important part in your baby's development.

You baby's health and safety are our top priorities. We care for our patients and their families with respect, compassion and exceptional care. On behalf of the entire team, we welcome you to the NICU.

Sincerely,

Piedmont Newton Hospital NICU



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Chapter 1: Getting Acquainted

- NICU parents are essential members of the healthcare team. We want you to feel welcome and we invite you to be with your baby as much as possible. The unit is open 24 hours per day.
- For the safety and privacy of our patients, visitation may be limited during:
 - Admission of a new baby
 - Special procedures
 - Transfer of a critically ill patient
- The NICU staff strives to keep all information private; however, because of the open design of the unit, it may be impossible to keep conversations from being overheard. We request that you respect the privacy of other families by staying at your baby's bedside. Thank you for not asking the staff questions about other babies.



- To protect you and your baby's privacy and medical information, your baby band has a 5 digit/3 letter code printed on it. Information will only be given over the phone to people who have this code.
- Cameras are welcomed in the unit. You may take as many pictures of your baby as you like. Please make sure other babies are not in the background of your pictures and ask nurses for their permission before including them in your photos.
- You may bring in blankets for your baby's bed. Your nurse will let you know when your baby is ready to wear clothing. Please wash your baby's outfits in gentle detergent before the first use and between each use. Blankets and clothing should be labeled with your baby's last name.

General NICU Information

Keeping your baby safe is our number one priority. To help us do this we ask ALL parents and visitors to the NICU to comply with the following infection control measures. While we know some of these requests can seem inconvenient, please know that these guidelines are designed to keep your baby and all of the other babies in our unit safe from infection and in a developmentally appropriate environment.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the single most effective means of preventing babies from getting an infection. Every time you come to visit your baby, you must “scrub in.” Remove all watches and jewelry and wash your hands to your elbows for one full minute with the scrub brush provided. Small baggies are provided at the side of the sink in which you can place your watches, bracelets and rings during your time in the NICU.

Cell Phone

Cell phones carry many germs. Using the wipes provided by the sink, please clean your cell phone upon every entry into the NICU and again if it becomes contaminated during your visit. Wipe off your phone before washing your hands as the cell phone wipes take 30 seconds to dry.

We also strive to create a quiet environment for our babies to develop appropriately. In that effort, we ask that you not hold conversations on your phone or play videos/music on your phone while in the NICU. Short, quiet facetime calls to family members to see the baby are appropriate. If you need to have a longer or more personal conversation, please exit the NICU and return when your call is completed. Please place your phone on silent while in the NICU.

Clothing

Clothing that is visibly soiled or heavily scented should be covered with a disposable gown upon entering the NICU. These are provided in the parent washroom. This includes clothing that may smell of smoke due to tobacco or marijuana use or second hand exposure.

Food and Drink

Food and drinks are not permitted in the NICU with the exception of water in a spill-proof container.

NICU Visitation

Due to the risk of infection for our babies, visitation is limited in the NICU. ONLY the mother, her banded support person and 4 other pre-selected people may visit the baby in the NICU. The 4 additional visitors must be over 18 and they cannot change throughout the baby's stay. These 4 visitors can only visit with one of the banded people. Due to space constraints in the NICU, only 2 people are allowed at a bedside at a time. The staff may ask to see the pink or blue band that matches your baby. Please keep this on at all times until the baby comes home, as this band is your "admission ticket" to the NICU. Bands are not valid if they have been removed and bands cannot be traded between individuals. Short, quiet face time calls to other family members and friends are allowed.



Touch Times

The best time to visit your baby is during his/her "touch times". Touch time is when your nurse is providing hands-on care. This is usually when your baby is most alert and will enjoy company. Between touch times it is vitally important that your baby is able to rest so they can grow and develop normally. Your nurse can inform you of when your baby's touch times will take place. These are usually every 3-4 hours around the clock.

Holding your baby in the NICU

When your baby is stable and their IV access can be safely managed, you will be able to hold your baby. Please know that while this is developmentally positive for your baby, there may be times when holding will need to be limited or postponed for the overall health of your baby. This may vary on a day-to-day basis.



Chapter 2: The NICU

- Piedmont Newton's NICU provides very high levels of care and is equipped to take care of babies with a full range of serious medical conditions. The NICU provides specialized, around-the-clock care for premature and sick babies.
- Babies are admitted to the NICU for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons might be prematurity, low apgar scores, breathing problems, low blood sugar levels, jaundice or infection. Please ask your nurse or doctor for more information. We can provide you with a hand-out regarding your infant's specific diagnoses.



The Team

- The babies in the NICU are cared for by a highly trained team of neonatologists, nurse practitioners, respiratory therapists and neonatal intensive care nurses. You and your family will also have access to all of the services provided at Piedmont Newton including lactation consultants, case managers, ultrasound, x-ray and other imaging services as needed.

The Equipment

- Equipment in the NICU is used to keep your baby warm and deliver oxygen, nutrition, fluids and medicine. It also helps the doctors and nurses monitor your baby's weight, heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and oxygen saturation. Please note that monitors frequently go off in the NICU and not all alarms indicate that something is wrong with your child. Nurses can see the monitors even at the nurses' station and they will come immediately to the bedside if it is necessary.

The Equipment

Cardiac Monitor



The cardiac monitor is the most commonly used piece of equipment. It measures the baby's heart rate, respirations, oxygen saturation and blood pressure. Our nurses can inform you as to what ranges we would like for your individual baby to be in for each of these measurements.

Radiant Warmer

This bed has an overhead heater to regulate body temperature. It heats up as baby gets cooler and cools down when baby is warm. It is open on all sides to allow the doctors and nurses easy access to care for babies while keeping them warm.



Giraffe Isolette



A Giraffe bed is a specially designed high-tech bed that provides a womb-like environment for your premature baby as he or she grows and develops.

Feeding Pump

This computerized feeding pump delivers feedings at a set volume and rate to babies who cannot eat by mouth.



Bubble CPAP

CPAP/SiPap provides a continuous flow of oxygen and air into the lungs and gently keeps the air sacs open to help babies breathe more easily and effectively.



Drager Ventilator

A ventilator is a type of respiratory equipment used to help babies breathe or to breathe for them. It is used when infants are not able to breathe effectively on their own.

Bili Lights

Bili lights provide a mode of treatment for jaundice in which the infant is placed under special bright blue lights that help break down the bilirubin in baby's blood. Jaundice is very common in premature babies.

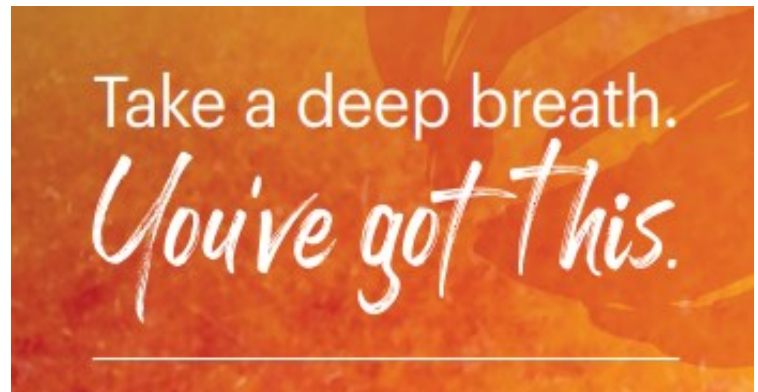


IV Pump

This device is used to deliver and measure intravenous (IV) fluids and medications to provide your baby with adequate nutritional support or medical treatment.

Chapter 3: Parenting in the NICU

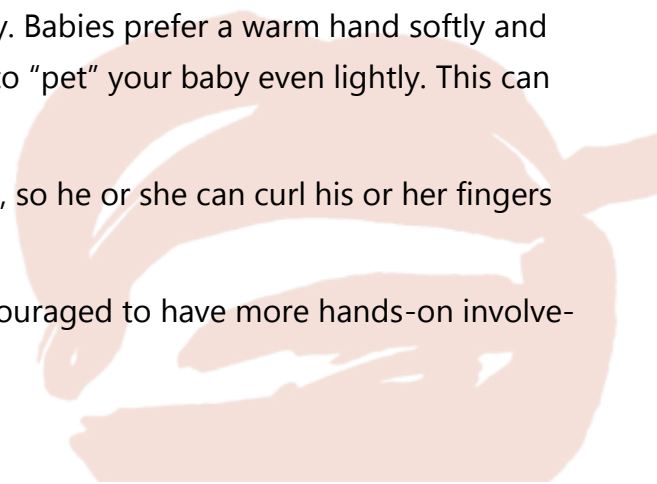
- It is easy to lose sight of the valuable role you, as a parent, play in your baby's health care team when there are so many people taking care of your baby. However, even very premature babies begin their interactions with their parents early on. If you are not able to hold your baby right away, do not shy away from parenting him or her.
- There are many things you can do to soothe, comfort and stay actively involved in your baby's care. It is important to keep the lines of communication open with your baby's nurses. They will help you figure out the best ways to interact with your baby. Sometimes they will suggest that you let your baby sleep when you are there because they know he or she has not slept well prior to your arrival. Sometimes they may suggest that you hold your baby because they know that is what you both need. After some time, you will begin to know what your baby needs. Try to be patient. Watch and listen to your baby's cues and remember that your role as a parent is essential.



Bonding with your baby in the NICU

All you need to start interacting with you baby is your touch, your voice and your face. Research shows that bonding is not something that only happens in the first few days after birth, but is ongoing. Although you baby may not be stable enough to be held initially, bonding can start with your presence at the bedside.

- Speak softly and sweetly to your baby.
- Touch your baby in a developmentally appropriate way. Babies prefer a warm hand softly and firmly around their feet, back or head. Resist the urge to "pet" your baby even lightly. This can cause them stress.
- You may also gently place a finger in your baby's palm, so he or she can curl his or her fingers around it.
- As your baby grows and gets stronger, you will be encouraged to have more hands-on involvement in your baby's care.



Kangaroo Care

Kangaroo care, or skin-to-skin, is a special technique for parents to hold their baby up against their bare chest. Studies show many benefits from skin-to-skin contact for both mom and baby. During the visit, the baby will be placed in an upright position on the parent's bare chest with his or her head over your heart, so he or she can listen to your heartbeat. The baby will be covered with blankets for additional warmth. Ask your nurse when kangaroo care will be appropriate for your baby.



Coping

Many parents of NICU babies are surprised by how upset they are by the admission of their baby to the NICU. It is important to know right away that it is normal to experience a confusing mix of feelings while your infant is in the NICU.

- The joy of having a newborn may be coupled with anger, guilt, fear and sadness that your baby is in the NICU.
- Emotions change dramatically from day to day, hour to hour and even minute to minute.
- If you feel like your baby's journey is an emotional roller-coaster ride, you are not alone. A combination of hormones, sleep deprivation, recovering from labor or a cesarean section, and love for your child can make coping with challenging times even harder than usual.
- You may find it difficult to bond with your baby. Let your nurses know how they can support you during this time. We are always happy to take photos and send them to you, answer questions, facilitate bonding and encourage you in your parenting journey.

Discharging Before Your Baby

Depending on the severity of your child's condition, it is possible you will need to leave the hospital without your baby. The staff understands this may be a difficult time for you, and they are ready to assist you with any needs you may have. Tips to get you through this:

- Stay connected to the NICU as much as you can
- Visit as frequently as possible
- If you can't visit, call often and speak to the nurse caring for your baby
- Take one of baby's blankets home with you so that the scent can remind you of your baby
- If you haven't already, consider pumping breastmilk for your baby

Parenting Your NICU Baby

Being a parent of a NICU baby can often feel like a loss of control. There are things you can do to involve yourself in the daily cares of your baby in a developmentally safe way:

- Visit during your baby's touch times
- Assist with changing your baby's diaper
- Learn to take your baby's temperature
- Read a book to your baby
- Talk to your baby in a low, calming voice
- Place your whole hand on the top of your baby's head and at the bottom of their feet or across their midsection with firm pressure
- Pump breastmilk for your baby
- Try placing a finger gently in your baby's palm, so he or she can curl their fingers around it



Taking Care of Yourself

- **Mother:** Remember that although your pregnancy has ended, during the first six weeks after you give birth, you are a postpartum woman whose body is going through all of the physical and emotional changes that occur at the end of all pregnancies.
- **Parents:** You are likely to be very focused on your NICU baby; however, you must make sure to take care of yourself and any other children you have as well.
- Get as much rest as possible
- Eat nutritious meals
- Accept the help of family and friends
- Limit the number of phone calls and visitors you accept
- Above all, be patient with yourself
- You will heal in your own way, in your own time



Taking Care of Your Other Children

- Try to spend some time alone with each of your other children during the week, even if it's just a few minutes. This will let them know they are still important to you, too.
- Read them books for children that explain NICU babies.
- Get siblings involved by encouraging them to draw pictures and make decorations for the baby's bed.

Chapter 4: Breastmilk and Feeding

Our NICU team and lactation consultants encourage you to provide breast milk for your baby if you are able, as it is an excellent source of nutrition for all newborns. Your baby will benefit from receiving your milk. The Donor Milk program is available for qualified candidates, including those under 34 weeks gestation.

Benefits of breastfeeding include:

- Brain and eye development
- Improved feeding tolerance
- Lower risk of allergies
- Lower risk of infection
- Lower risk of Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC)
- Lower risk of RSV
- Increased bonding between mom and baby

Pumping in the NICU

Even if you were not planning on breastfeeding your baby, the NICU team highly encourages you to provide breastmilk for your baby while he or she remains in the NICU. You won't regret giving your baby as many health benefits as

possible. Our lactation specialists and nursing staff will provide you with the tools and information you need to supply your baby with breast milk. Because your baby is in the NICU, you should plan to obtain a breast pump for use at home to avoid interruption while pumping. Below are some helpful tips on obtaining a breast pump.

- Contact your insurance provider to see if they cover the purchase or rental costs of a breast pump.
- If you were enrolled in the Women, Infant and Children program prior to delivery, contact them to make an appointment to receive a pump. When you call, make sure to mention that your baby is in the NICU.
- Speak with a lactation consultant for help with obtaining or using a pump or establishing a pumping routine.
- You may decide to purchase a pump for ongoing use with your baby or for use with future pregnancies.



Tips for Pumping

Setting up a pumping schedule is helpful in establishing a good milk supply:

- Always wash your hands prior to pumping.
- Pump every 2-3 hours during the day, using an electric pump for 10-15 minutes on each side (8 to 12 times in a 24 hour period).
- Pump at least one time during the night, allowing no more than 5 hours to pass without pumping.
- Keep a log of when and how much you pump (ask one of your nurses or lactation for a log).
- In the beginning, drops of colostrum are normal. Celebrate any amount of breast milk you make. Even the smallest amount will help your baby.
- Pump at your baby's bedside or right after holding your baby if possible.
- Tell your doctor, midwife or nurse practitioner you are pumping before getting any prescriptions.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Make an appointment with one of our lactation consultants at any time during your breastfeeding journey, even after your baby comes home.

Storage and Transportation of Breastmilk

- The NICU staff will provide you with sterile bottles and labels to properly identify your milk. Each time you pump remember to put the bottle label with name, date and time of collection.
- Breast milk should be stored in the sterile bottles provided by the NICU staff. These bottles are BPA-free.
- Notify your baby's nurse if you are taking any medications.
- If bringing milk in from home, please transport milk in the orange transport bag provided by lactation or in a container/cooler that prevents thawing.

Storage Type	Storage Time
Freshly pumped	Refrigerate if not used within 4 hours
Refrigerated:	
*Fresh Milk	4 days (96 hours)
*Thawed Milk	1 day (24 hours)
Frozen Milk	4 months in frost-free freezer
	6 months in deep freezer



How will my baby be fed in the NICU?

Most babies born before 34 weeks (and some born after 34 weeks) cannot coordinate sucking with swallowing and breathing. In the NICU, you may hear the staff refer to this as “suck, swallow, breathe.”

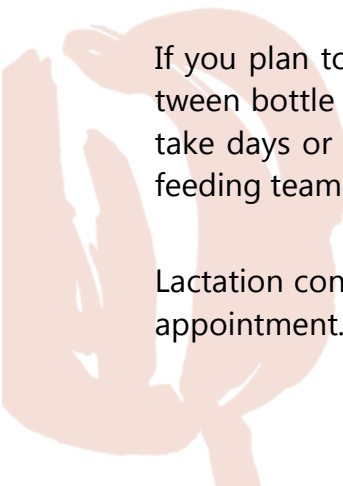


When your baby is ready to receive your milk, it will either be given through a tube that goes through their mouth or nose to their stomach or they will be able to eat by mouth (either on the breast or with a bottle). The doctor may order something called Human Milk Fortifier (HMF) be added to your breastmilk. HMF gives your baby a little “extra boost” by adding calories, iron and vitamins.

There may be times when it becomes necessary to supplement your breast milk with formula. Your baby will still receive the benefits of breast milk even if they get formula supplementation. Donor breastmilk is also available to babies under 34 weeks or with special medical conditions. Your baby will always receive your breastmilk if it is available, before receiving formula or donor milk.

If you plan to breastfeed, the nurses and lactation specialists will assist you in transitioning between bottle feeding and breastfeeding. Learning to breastfeed effectively is a process that may take days or weeks. You and your baby have a better chance of becoming a successful breastfeeding team if you are patient, persistent and positive.

Lactation consultants are at the hospital 5-6 days per week and can assist you with a feeding by appointment. Many of our nurses are also skilled at assisting moms with breastfeeding.



Chapter 5: Discharge Planning

The most common question parents ask is “When will my baby get to come home?” Unfortunately, there is not an answer to that question that applies to all babies. If your baby has been admitted for prematurity, you can generally expect that they will be able to come home around their original due date. If your baby has been admitted due to another diagnosis, it will depend on when their treatment is completed and their clinical issues have resolved.

Keep in mind that the NICU world is often one of progress and regression. Some days may seem like your baby is making great strides and is almost ready to go home and other days may seem like a set back. This is normal. Your baby is learning to do many new things in a short period of time.

Use the chart below as a checklist to keep track of your baby’s progress. The more goals they have met, the closer they are to being discharged.

Discharge Goal	Goal Met
Baby is off of all respiratory support for 48 hours prior to discharge	
Baby is on full feeds and receives all nutrition by breast or formula for 48 hours	
Baby is able to maintain temperature in an open crib for 48 hours	
Baby shows consistent weight gain	
No longer requires antibiotics to fight infection	
No bradycardic episodes or desaturations for the 48 hours prior to discharge	
No apneic episodes for the 5 days prior to discharge	
Parents have watched all discharge videos	
At home medication teaching completed	
Hepatitis B Vaccine administered or declined	
State metabolic screens completed	
CCHD completed and passed	
Hearing screen completed	
Circumcision performed (if desired)	
Car seat test passed	

*Goals do not have to be achieved in order

Resources

The following resources may be helpful to you for further information during your baby's hospital stay and beyond:

Recommended Reading:

Preemies: [The Essential Guide for Parents of Premature Babies](#) by Dana Wechsler Linden, Emma Trenti Paroli and Misa Wechsler Doron, M.D.

The following contact information may also be helpful with accessing information:

- AAP.org American Academy of Pediatrics
- Marchofdimes.com/home or call 800.367.6630, The March of Dimes organization provides parent support information
- Socialsecurity.gov or call 800.772.1213. Provides access to Supplemental Security Income Benefits for disabled children
- Children's First, a program of the Georgia Department of Public Health dph.georgia.gov/children1st
- First Steps
- WIC

Our Nurses

We believe our entire staff provides exceptional care, but if there has been a nurse or other staff member who has gone over and above and who stands out to you for their service, you can nominate them for a Daisy Award or Piedmont's 360 award. Nomination forms are in the parent washroom or you can nominate a member of our staff online at daisyfoundation.org or piedmont.org/promise-360-nomination.bk

