



NICU Parent

DAILY REMINDERS



Everyone's NICU experience is unique. This is meant as a guide to help you, it is not an exhaustive list. Feel free to use, don't use or add-on based on your journey.

Things to Do:

- Talk with the providers to hear what progress has been made since you last visited
- Talk with the providers about issues and question that you have
- Both parents are equally important in helping their baby grow and develop. Being involved in your baby's care and activities is important for their growth and development
- Ask nurses how to interact with your baby. This may include, "hand hugs", Skin-to-skin contact, using a mirror, engaging in care times, reading to your baby
- Create routines for your visits, for example a "goodnight" routine that includes reading can help reassure your feelings

Questions:

- What do all of the machines and wires do for my baby?
- What is my baby's schedule?
- How can I help my baby?
- How can I comfort my baby?
- Can I change my baby's diaper and clothes when they are attached to all the wires and in an incubator?
- What can I do with my baby?
- Who can visit my baby in the NICU?
- What is the schedule for the providers?
- How will the providers communicate with me?
- How can I leave questions for the providers when I leave bedside?
- What are the milestones that have to be reached to "graduate" from the NICU?
- What support resources are available for parents?
- How do I know if I have post partum depression and who can help me with it?

Feelings:

You may or may not experience some, all, or none of these feelings. These feelings are common, but can feel very distressing and for some, can disrupt daily functioning. Please reach out to a member of your psychosocial team within the unit, if you are concerned about your feelings.

- Nervous or scared seeing your small baby connected to tubes and wires and having providers doing procedures
- Feeling of loss because things didn't go as planned in your pregnancy, labor and delivery, and after the baby was born
- Struggling to keep in touch with friends and family
- Struggling with feeling like a parent to this baby
- Holding your breath, feeling as if something "bad" is going to happen, even if your baby is doing well
- Worrying about how your baby is doing medically and if they are developing as they should
- Frustrated since you don't have control over what's happening or you are not getting answers
- "Sensory Overload" due to all the sights and sounds in the NICU
- Overwhelmed by all the information you are given from providers

Routines are established in the NICU, be grateful
Your baby is in the best hands at the NICU

Author: Jaci Smith, MA, LEND Family Trainee 2023-24

Citation: Smith, J. (2024). NICU Parents: Daily Reminders Checklist. JFK Partners: Aurora, CO.

Special thanks to:

Allison G. Dempsey, PhD, PMH-C, Associate Professor, Divisions of Adult Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Director, Connections Program for High-Risk Infants and Families, Director of Informatics, Department of Psychiatry University of Colorado School of Medicine

Sunah Susan Hwang, MD, MPH, PhD, The Lula O. Lubchenco Chair in Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Director, Perinatal Health Services Research Section of Neonatology, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine



Resources:

Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, *NICU Parent Resource Guide*.

Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, *NICU Nurse Resource Guide*.

"This project was supported, in part, by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Grant T73MC11044 and by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) under the University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCDEDD) Grant 90DDUC0106 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government."