

Parenting in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU): How to Be Involved as a Member of Your Baby’s Healthcare Team

In addition to providing high quality neonatal intensive care, the NICU healthcare team will help you gain the knowledge and skills to parent your baby in the NICU and when you go home. Even if you have had a baby in the NICU before, there may be other things to learn about parenting the newest member of your family.

You are welcome in the NICU 24/7.



You are an important member of your baby’s healthcare team. The healthcare team values your unique knowledge about your baby. You are encouraged to be with your baby and participate in basic care as soon as you are ready and want to participate.

Benefits to Participating in Your Baby’s Care	How Can You Partner with the Healthcare Team in the NICU?
<p>There are many benefits to participating in your baby’s care in the NICU, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence. When parents are confident in caring for their baby in the NICU, they can go home sooner, if the baby is medically ready. • Early relationship with your baby supports their brain development • Decreased parental stress and anxiety • Fewer symptoms of post-partum depression • Parents’ participation in care helps their babies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stabilize their breathing and heart rate ○ Breastfeed ○ Gain weight ○ Decrease needs for breathing and feeding supports 	<p>Asking questions is one of the best ways to become more comfortable in the NICU. It’s okay to ask the same question as many times as you need.</p> <p>Keep track of your baby’s journey and write down your questions.</p> <p>During bedside rounds, you can use prompts in the Alberta FiCare Parent Journal to share information about your baby that is meaningful to you. Ask your nurse about all the ways you can participate in rounds.</p> <p>Learn your baby’s cues so you can learn to respond to them. Knowing your baby’s cues can also help you talk to your baby’s healthcare team about how they are doing.</p> <p>Provide basic care as you are willing and ready. This will give you opportunities to bond with your baby.</p>

Ways to Participate in your Baby's Care in the NICU

- Be present in the NICU as much as you want to or are able. Feel free to call the NICU any time for updates.
- Participate in bedside rounds when, if, and how you choose
- Change diapers/clothes. Clothing with buttons or snaps continues to allow medical equipment to monitor your baby's health.
- Touch and hold your baby
- Skin to skin care (Kangaroo care)
- Bathe your baby
- Weigh your baby
- Feeding
- Read, sing, talk and play with your baby
- Take your baby's temperature
- Provide comfort measures during some treatments and procedures
- Take care of your baby by taking care of yourself – it is important to take breaks from the NICU and get rest

Based on your baby's unique situation, there are more ways to participate in your baby's care – ask a healthcare provider how you can participate.

Things Only Healthcare Providers Do in the NICU

- Silence alarms
- Adjust settings on oxygen flow or equipment
- Give intravenous (IV) medications
- Chart in the healthcare record
- Assist with x-rays

If you aren't sure about whether it is safe for you to do something in the NICU, ask a healthcare provider. Your questions are always welcome.