

NICU Tips

- Ask questions and ask for the help you need. What are the resources available to you at the hospital?
- Ask how you can be involved in the care of your baby(s). When and how long can you hold them? May you help change their diapers, give them a bath, etc.
- Call in the help early- Ask people to help by bringing you healthy meals, housecleaning, errands, driving you or your milk to the hospital, staying with siblings while you visit the hospital, etc.
- Does the hospital have a family overnight room? Or a deal with a local hotel for discounts?
- Seek support. See resource list for specialized support groups.
- Take a break. If you need a day off to rest or go do something fun- do it! Your baby(s) needs healthy parents.
- Take turns. Share the job of visiting the NICU with your partner (or a grandma if allowed).
- Kangaroo care. Read the benefits below.
- Breastfeeding and pumping breast milk. Get advice from a Lactation Consultant (usually covered by insurance if you or baby are still checked in to the hospital) Read the benefits below.
- Share the way you feel with anyone who will listen without judgment. See SOLACE under resources or other support groups. Write how you feel down. All emotions are ok and normal!
- Remember that many emotions have to do with the adjustment of your hormones!
- If you feel a lot depression, anxiety, or panic- see resources for postpartum mood disorders and support. You are not alone!

Shorten the NICU Stay

The benefits of kangaroo care- Skin to skin contact with a caring adult.

- Babies grow faster and gain weight quicker.
- Babies regulate their temperature, breathing and heart rate more efficiently.
- It reduces stress hormones and increases anti-stress hormones released by baby(s).
- When mom does the kangaroo care it increases mother's milk supply.
- When mom does the kangaroo care babies learn to breastfeed earlier with less problems.

Some babies may be too fragile to be held at first. Ask if you can gently place your hand on baby's head or chest instead.

The benefits of breastfeeding or giving baby(s) expressed breast milk.

- Strengthens baby's immune system. Baby receives moms priceless immunoglobins reducing the risk of infection and increasing the strength of baby's intestines.
- You make milk specifically for a preterm baby's needs- the calorie and fat intake are higher than if baby were born full term.
- Babies grow faster and gain weight quicker.
- Babies leave the NICU on average two weeks earlier!
- Babies have higher IQ's.
- Plus all the benefits of Kangaroo Care.

Resource List can be found at www.birthlore.com

This handout was created by Heather Ward, CD(DONA), PD, CCE, CLE using these resources-

[Preemies](#) by Linden, Paroli, and Dr Doron

[Having Twins and More](#) by Elizabeth Noble

[A Premie Needs His Mother](#) DVD by Dr Jane Morton

[Pregnancy, Childbirth, and the Newborn](#) by Simpkin, Whalley, and Keppler