Helpful Resources for Parents

**What are the meanings of the NICU terms?**

- **Apnea**: A pause of over 20 seconds in an infant's breathing pattern.
- **Blood gas**: A blood test for determining the pH and levels of oxygen, carbon dioxide and bicarbonate in the blood. The test tells if a baby needs more or less oxygen or other changes in the respirator.
- **Bradydardia**: Slowing of the heart.
- **Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP)**: A method in which low pressure is kept in the airways to keep the air sacs in the lungs open and make it easier for a baby to breathe. The baby does all the breathing on his or her own.
- **Cyanosis**: Bluish coloration of the skin, lips or nails that happens when there is not enough oxygen in the blood.
- **Echocardiogram**: A method of recording a picture of the heart using the echo of sound waves that can be used to evaluate the structure and function of the heart.
- **Endotracheal tube (ETT)**: A plastic tube placed through the nose or mouth into the trachea (windpipe). The tube allows oxygen to be delivered to the lungs by a respirator.
- **Gavage feeding**: Feeding through a small plastic tube passed through the nose or mouth into the stomach.
- **Gestational age**: Age of a baby in weeks, starting from the beginning of pregnancy.
- **Hematocrit ("crit")**: The percentage of red blood cells in the blood.
- **Intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH)**: Abnormal bleeding in the brain's central chambers (ventricles).
- **Intravenous (IV)**: A thick, plastic tube placed in a baby's umbilical artery and/or vein (UA or UV line) or in a vein in the head, hand or foot. It is used to take a blood sample and/or to give fluids and nourishment.
- **Jaundice**: A yellow color of the skin caused by too much bilirubin in the blood. Usually, this is a temporary condition.
- **Nasogastric (NG) or orogastric tube**: A small plastic tube placed in the stomach through the nose or mouth. It can be used to feed a baby, give medicines or remove air from the stomach.
- **Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC)**: A serious illness that affects the bowel wall.
- **NPO**: Latin abbreviation for "nothing by mouth." Baby is not fed by mouth but by IV.
- **Oscillator ventilator**: A highly specialized breathing machine.
- **Respirator (ventilator)**: A machine to help with breathing.
- **Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP)**: An eye disease found primarily in premature infants.
- **Sepsis**: An infection.
- **Tachypnea**: Fast breathing.
- **Vital sign**: An indication that a person is alive. Vital signs include temperature, heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure.

These glossary terms and more can be found at: http://www.umassmemorial.org/MedicalCenterIP.cfm?id=3409