

Raising a Premature Baby in the NICU

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.
- **Bradycardia:** 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 (IHV):** 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>

Local Resources

March of Dimes-Oklahoma Chapter (<http://www.marchofdimes.com/oklahoma/oklahoma.asp>)
This local chapter of March of Dimes provides local events and supports for families of premature babies.

Oklahoma Family Network

(www.oklahomafamilynetwork.org)

OFN in an organization that provides 1-1 parent mentors, and local resources and support for families of premature children and children with special needs.

Internet Resources

Preemie-L (www.preemie-l.org)

Preemie-L is an online parent support group where parents swap advice and provide comfort.

Meriter Health Services: Preemie Health (<http://www.meriter.com/living/preemie/>)

Meriter is a resource developed by NICU staff to inform and educate parents how to take care of their baby while and after their baby is in the hospital.

March of Dimes (www.marchofdimes.com)

March of Dimes provides information on pregnancy and newborn health as well as has a wide wealth of resources on raising a premature baby. March of Dimes is involved in advocacy for pregnancy health and prematurity.

Pediatric Medical Group (www.pediatric.com)

Pediatric has a variety of information for families experiencing high risk pregnancies and or have high risk newborns. Includes information on a variety of medical conditions, procedures, tests, medications, and other issues surrounding a premature baby.

Helpful Books on Prematurity

Books for Parents

What to Do When Your Baby is Premature (Three Rivers Press, 2000). By Joseph A. Garcia-Prats and Sharon Simmons Hornfischer. This book was written by medical staff as a guide on making difficult medical decisions about your baby.

Preemies: The Essential Guide for Parents of Premature Babies (Pocket Books, 2000).

By Dana Wechsler Linden, Emma Trenti Paroli, and Mia Wechsler Doron M.D. This book provides a variety of information on premature babies.

Books for Children

The Tiniest Warrior of All: A Fairytale for Families with a Premature Baby (Oblio Press, 2005). By Nicola ND Maher. This book is a fairytale that helps children understand prematurity.

My Baby Sister is a Preemie (Zonderkidz, 2005). By Diane M. Amadeo. This book helps children understand why their baby sibling isn't coming home yet and why their parents are sad and distressed.