NICU FACT KIT

FIND ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS:

- What is a NICU?
- Why do some babies need a NICU?
- What are the differences between NICU levels?
- What should I look for in a NICU?
- Where can I learn more?

Texas Children's®
Newborn Center

Taking care of sick and premature infants requires compassion, skill and the highest level of expertise. At Texas Children's Newborn Center, one of the largest neonatal intensive care units in the nation, ***we provide the most comprehensive neonatal care available***, access to physicians and surgeons in virtually every kind of subspecialty care a baby might need and a nurturing, supportive environment that includes the family as part of the care team.

Led by internationally recognized physicians, ***our team of specially trained neonatologists, neonatal nurses and other newborn care specialists are dedicated to providing evidence-based care*** to critically ill newborns and helping their families through the challenges of prematurity and illness.

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WHY SOME BABIES NEED NICUs

According to the March of Dimes, *about 1 in 10 babies will require intensive medical care immediately after birth*. This care takes place in a neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU (*pronounced nik-you*), a hospital facility designed specifically for the care of premature or ill newborns.

Babies who are born before their due date, experience complications at delivery or show signs of a health condition before they are born may need NICU care. Some of the most common conditions treated at Texas Children's Newborn Center, one of the nation's most experienced NICUs, are:

- Prematurity
- Breathing or lung problems
- Birth defects
- Genetic conditions
- Heart disease
- Infections
- Metabolic disorders
- Ophthalmologic (eye/vision) conditions or defects

Texas Children's Newborn Center cares for the sickest newborn babies with the most complex conditions in our Level 3C NICU and babies needing less advanced care in our Level 2 NICU.

WHAT NICU LEVELS MEAN

Many hospitals have NICUs, but not all NICUs are the same. The American Academy of Pediatrics differentiates among units by defining levels based on the complexity of medical conditions the facility is equipped to treat:

Level 1: Regular nursery care available at most hospitals that deliver babies

Level 2: Intensive care for sick and premature infants

Level 3: Comprehensive care for more seriously ill newborns

Level 3C: Highest level of care available, staffed and equipped to care for babies with the most complex medical conditions

Many area hospitals have Level 2 or 3 NICUs but are not equipped to provide the advanced level of care some newborns need. ***Texas Children's Newborn Center is one of only two Level 3C NICUs in the Houston region***, able to provide babies with the highest level of care. In fact, many area hospitals with less advanced NICUs transfer infants to us when more experience and specialized care is required.

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YOUR BABY'S URGENT MEDICAL PLAN — B.U.M.P.

Even with the most "normal" pregnancy, unexpected complications can arise. Planning ahead of time can help provide peace of mind for you and your family. If your baby needs a higher level of medical care, you have the right to ask that your baby be transferred to the NICU of your choice. To plan for that possibility, specialists at Texas Children's recommend that all expectant parents create a B.U.M.P.—Baby's Urgent Medical Plan—that makes their preferences known to their doctors and families.

First, research the 10 NICU considerations outlined on this page. Next, discuss neonatal intensive care with your doctor. Once you've identified the highest-level NICUs in your area and your choice for care, you're ready to make your B.U.M.P.

Write down or print out the address and key contact information for your preferred facility, plus any special notes discussed with your doctor and pack a copy in your suitcase. Your B.U.M.P. is a critical addition to a standard birth plan that will make it easier to know what to do if the unexpected happens.

TOP 10 CONSIDERATIONS IN CHOOSING A NICU

Because major differences exist in the quality of care babies and their families receive from hospital to hospital, it's important to research your options before your baby's birth. When considering NICU care, you'll want to ask about:

1. Volumes/Outcomes

How many babies are treated annually? What are the hospital's results? For example, Texas Children's Newborn Center treats more than 2,000 babies a year, making us one of the nation's largest and most experienced NICUs. Research shows that babies treated at higher volume newborn centers have better outcomes, so this is very important.

2. Round-the-clock care

The highest-level NICUs provide access to a variety of sub-specialists 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Ask if dedicated, on-site neonatal surgeons, heart surgeons and pediatric anesthesiologists are available to offer round-the-clock care. Are a neonatologist, nurse practitioner, neonatal nurse and respiratory specialist available to care for your baby whenever the need may arise?

3. Environmental controls

Exemplary hospitals ensure minimal activity at bedside, soft lights and low noise levels, which reduce stimulation and allow babies to rest. Ask what, if any, efforts are made to minimize the effects of sound and light on NICU babies.

4. Nutritional care

The benefits of breastfeeding may be even more important if your baby is premature or needs special care. Does the center encourage and support breast-feeding and offer human donor milk to preterm infants? Are neonatal nutritional specialists on staff? At Texas Children's Newborn Center, lactation consultants guide mothers through the unique challenges of breastfeeding a hospitalized infant, and our Mother's Own Milk Bank provides state-of-the-art storage and preparation of pumped breast milk to feed infants in our NICUs.

5. Respiratory care

The highest level of respiratory support is only available in the highest level NICUs. Because premature and ill infants may require advanced respiratory support, it's important to research a facility's particular capabilities and limitations.

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6. Parental support

Because parental involvement is crucial to baby's treatment, responsive NICU programs support parents in every way possible. Is the presence of parents and family encouraged 24/7? What support services are available to parents? Are there overnight facilities for parents who want to stay on-site? Are parents encouraged to touch and hold their babies?

7. Team approach

In addition to neonatologists and specialized nursing care, premature and sick newborns may need physical therapists, respiratory specialists, developmental specialists and dietitians. The practice of all these specialists working together to care for your baby is known as a multidisciplinary approach. Ask if your hospital practices a multidisciplinary approach to infant care.

8. Transition home

Ask how the NICU will help you and your baby get ready to go home. Are there rooming-in facilities to help ease the transition from hospital to home? Will your family's pediatrician be involved in discharge planning? Are parents given the skills needed to provide care once home?

9. Ongoing research

Academic medical centers, like Texas Children's, conduct research that leads to advances in patient care, offering more options and more hope. Access to the latest medical break-throughs can make all the difference. Ask what research is currently underway at the hospital, and what research conducted at the hospital has led to improved care for newborns.

10. Evidence-based care

Evidence-based care is developed from research that shows what is best for newborns who need specialized care. Make sure your baby's care is based on the most up-to-date information available. Ask if guidelines are in place to minimize tests and promote the best possible practices. Confirm that the hospital trains its staff to deliver evidence-based care.

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DELIVERING YOUR BABY WITH TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

If you have a high-risk pregnancy or your baby has a condition detected in utero—or if you want the peace of mind of delivering where you know your baby will receive the highest level of care possible should a complication arise at birth—consider delivering with us.

Our Partnership with St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital

Texas Children's Hospital manages antepartum, labor, delivery and postpartum care at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, providing an exceptional, family-centered maternity experience.

We are committed to a birthing philosophy focused on mother, baby and family. From the moment you arrive for delivery, you are involved in every aspect of the birthing process—from labor and delivery to postpartum care. Once your baby is born, your nurse cares for both of you together in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Because Texas Children's Hospital and St. Luke's and are connected via a corridor, the world-renowned pediatric specialists at Texas Children's Newborn Center are just steps away—ready to provide the exceptional care your baby needs—without ever having to leave the building. Learn more about delivering your baby with Texas Children's Hospital at **www.texaschildrens.org/carecenters/newborn/delivering_with_TCH.aspx.**

Our Affiliate Programs

Our affiliation with four Level 2 NICUs in community hospitals brings the excellence of our Newborn Center to outlying areas of the city, where we promote the same quality and care standards followed at the NICUs in the Newborn Center.

If a child born in one of these community hospitals needs the care offered only in a Level 3C NICU—available at Texas Children's Newborn Center—that baby is transferred immediately. When a baby graduates to a Level 2 nursery, the family can request transfer back to the community hospital to maintain the continuity of care so vital to helping newborns thrive. And if a mother is hospitalized, most of our affiliates offer Family Vision, an audio/video link that allows her to interact with her baby and care team at Texas Children's Newborn Center.

Texas Children's is proud to work with these hospitals to provide high-quality care to newborns and their families.

Methodist Willowbrook Hospital

Methodist San Jacinto Hospital

St. Luke's Sugar Land Hospital

St. Luke's The Woodlands Hospital

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The Kangaroo Crew: Transporting Newborns to Texas Children's

Many of the babies cared for at Texas Children's Newborn Center are born with us through our partnership with St. Luke's. Others are transferred to Texas Children's from local, state, national and even international facilities.

In fact, every year more than 700 babies are transferred to us via our Kangaroo Crew—a specialized transport team that efficiently and safely brings critically ill babies from outlying hospitals directly to Texas Children's. The transport team includes a neonatal nurse practitioner, a neonatal nurse and neonatal respiratory therapist.

If your newborn needs to be transferred to Texas Children's Newborn Center, have your doctor call our transfer center toll free at (877) 770-5550.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR B.U.M.P.

Texas Children's Hospital is located in Houston's Texas Medical Center near the intersection of Fannin Street and Holcombe Boulevard. Texas Children's Newborn Center is located on the 4th floor of Texas Children's West Tower building.

Address

Texas Children's Hospital
6621 Fannin Street
West Tower, Fourth Floor
Houston, Texas 77030

Phone

Level 3 NICU (832) 824-6155
Level 2 NICU (832) 826-6165

Physician Request for a Consult

(877) NEONATE or
(877) 636-6283 *(toll free)*

Physician Request for Transfer

(832) 824-5550 or
(877) 770-5550 *(toll free)*

Referral Fax

(832) 825-6229

Learn More

For more information about neonatal intensive care, NICUs, your Baby's Urgent Medical Plan (B.U.M.P.) or Texas Children's Newborn Center, please visit:
www.newborn.texaschildrens.org.

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