

Dear NICU Parents,

We would like to warmly welcome you to our NICU. We are here to give your baby the best care possible and to help you understand your baby's condition and treatments. We know this is not how you had imagined you would welcome your baby into the world. You may have mixed feelings of joy and sadness. You may also be feeling scared and overwhelmed with the sights and sounds of monitors and alarms. We want you to have the best NICU experience possible. This handout provides resources for you to learn how to best care for your baby throughout your NICU stay.

NICU Contact Information:

WT 4th floor: 407-609-3004

WT 5th floor: 407-609-3005

5ETW: 407-303-9152

References

Developmental Milestones. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/nicu-developmental-milestones>

Baby Steps at 22-27 Weeks

Hi, family! Here are some ways you can help support my brain and growth development. Every baby is on their own unique NICU journey and our needs will differ. No worries if I don't meet all these steps now. Please talk with my medical team (nurses, therapists, etc.) about what items fit my specific developmental needs.

Movement

- I am easily startled. Touch, light and noise might upset me.
- I need help to keep my arms and legs bent and close to my body. A positioning wrap helps me keep this position.
- My movements are mostly jerks and twitches. [Why? I am just getting used to gravity.]

Sleep

- I sleep for 20 to 22 hours a day to grow and heal.
- I like it best when it is quiet, and the lights are low.

Touch

- I like to hold your finger to comfort me.
- When you touch me, keep your hands steady and firm. I like continuous gentle pressure.
- My favorite touch is "kangaroo care," also called skin-to-skin holding.

Senses

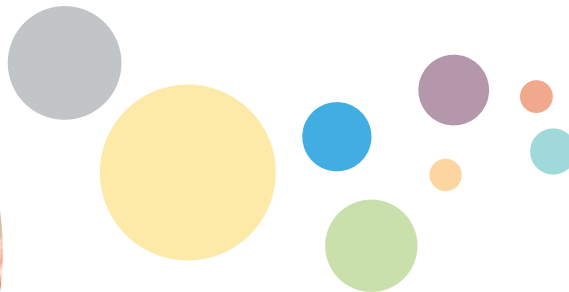
- One of my biggest jobs is keeping my heart rate and breathing pattern steady.
- I may not be ready to open my eyes. Protect me from bright light.
- I need to hear your voice. I will respond better if you talk, hum or sing to me quietly. Pick a special song for me and sing or hum quietly for short periods of time to comfort me. Use your voice to interact softly and do not use any devices.
- Bring in a fabric heart that you've held on your skin, so I can learn your scent. You can find these in the parent lounge.

Feeding

- I am likely not yet ready for a pacifier. I need to focus on breathing for now.

Social/Emotional

- I know when you are close to me.
- Softly hum a song that's special to me and you.



Baby Steps at 28-32 Weeks

Hi, family! Here are some ways you can help support my brain and growth development. Every baby is on their own unique NICU journey and our needs will differ. No worries if I don't meet all these steps now. Please talk with my medical team (nurses, therapists, etc.) about what items fit my specific developmental needs.

Movement

- I am trying to bend my arms and legs now, but I still need your help to curl up and feel cozy. Using a positioning wrap helps me to stay in the best position.
- I still need help to keep me tucked and supported, just like when I was in my mommy's tummy. This helps me get big and strong! My positioning wrap will help me with this.
- My stress signs: a grimace, stiff arms and legs, wide-open hands, toes spread apart, and hiccups.

Sleep

- I am trying to be awake and calm for short amounts of time.
- I like it best when it is quiet, and the lights are low.
- I grow and heal when I am in a deep sleep.

Touch

- I like steady, firm touch. Light touch and stroking may upset me.
- My favorite touch is skin-to-skin holding.
- Use my blankets or your hands to help me tuck into a fetal position. This is called "hand containment."

Senses

- One of my biggest jobs is keeping my heart rate and breathing pattern steady.
- I open my eyes when the lights are low.
- I stay more relaxed with quiet noise. Speak softly to me. I can tell your voice from other people's voices. Sing and hum quietly to help me be comfortable during stressful situations. Sing your special song during key moments in the day to help me get familiar with it.
- Bring in a fabric heart that you've held on your skin, so I can remember your scent. You can find this in the parent lounge.

Feeding

- I am not quite ready, but I may start to show signs of interest in sucking on a pacifier. Please offer me my pacifier during tube feeds by "rooting" me. The nurse will show you how. That lets me tell you if I am ready at that moment, from a breathing perspective, to suck. I will tell you if I want the smaller or the larger pacifier by latching smoothly on the one I prefer.

Social/Emotional

- I may become alert to your voice.
- I am learning to calm myself by bringing my hands to my mouth and face.
- I am learning to interact: slow movements and steadiness make me feel safe.



Baby Steps at 33-36 Weeks

Hi, family! Here are some ways you can help support my brain and growth development. Every baby is on their own unique NICU journey and our needs will differ. No worries if I don't meet all these steps now. Please talk with my medical team (nurses, therapists, etc.) about what items fit my specific developmental needs.

Movement

- I may start to kick now when I am awake.
- I can turn my head from the middle to the side.
- Occupational therapy can help me get stronger and practice my movements. Ask my nurse or therapist if I am ready for occupational therapy.
- My stress signs are: stiff arms and legs, arching, wide open hands, toes spread apart, yawning, sneezing, hiccups and turning my head away.
- My self-calming behaviors are: hands to the mouth and face, grabbing your finger, pushing my feet against a stable surface like the nest or your hand, and sucking my fingers or pacifier.

Sleep

- I am waking up many times during the day and staying awake longer.
- I like dim lighting in the daytime and lights out at night.
- I still need deep sleep to grow and develop.

Touch

- I like skin-to-skin contact and steady, firm touch. Light touch may upset me.
- I still like to be swaddled in bed and when I am being held. It comforts me.

Senses

- Shield me from bright lights.
- Loud noises still may upset me.
- I can see 6 to 8 inches away, but I am not ready for mobiles or pictures.
- Ask my nurse if I am ready for music therapy.
- I can tell your voice from other people's voices. I can start to recognize our special song. Use songs for routines and transitions. Hum or sing a special song before going to sleep, songs for bonding, songs when changing diapers or swaddling and sing my name.

Feeding

- I will like my pacifier even more now, but sometimes I may suck too fast and forget to breathe. You can help me remember to breathe by "pacing me." The nurse or therapist will show you how.
- Please offer me my pacifier dipped in milk during tube feeds by rooting me. This helps me learn to swallow tiny amounts in preparation for feeding by mouth. Remember to pace me.
- Ask my nurse if I am ready for feeding therapy with our feeding/swallowing specialists.
- Ask my nurse or therapist if I'm ready to feed by mouth. I will need an order from my doctor.
- I am just learning how to suck, swallow, and breathe. I will need help to coordinate swallowing and breathing. It takes 31 muscles and 5 nerves in your brain to eat safely. What a big job! Watch me closely and help me to focus on breathing.
- Learning to feed is the most complex thing I need to do to go home. Please be patient with me. The team is here to help you support me.

Social/Emotional

- I am ready for you to hold and talk to me when I am awake. I am learning to focus on your face.
- Teach me to comfort myself by helping me with my self-calming behaviors (listed above).
- I like to hear songs that you have been singing to me, especially if you sing my name. It helps me feel close to you.



Baby Steps at 37-40 Weeks

Hi, family! Here are some ways you can help support my brain and growth development. Every baby is on their own unique NICU journey and our needs will differ. No worries if I don't meet all these steps now. Please talk with my medical team (nurses, therapists, etc.) about what items fit my specific developmental needs.

Movement

- My arms and legs are bent almost all the time now. I am stronger, so I can keep this position by myself more and more.
- My movements are smoother because I am stronger now.
- I can turn my head from the middle to the side.
- My behavioral stress signs are: stiff arms and legs, arching, wide open hands, toes spread apart, yawning, sneezing, hiccups, and turning my head away.
- My self-calming behaviors are: hands to mouth and face, grabbing your finger, pushing my feet against a stable surface like the nest or your hand, and sucking my fingers or pacifier.

Sleep

- I am waking up several times during the day and staying awake longer.
- I like dim lighting in the daytime and lights out at night.
- As a newborn, I sleep 17 to 20 hours a day.
- If I am getting ready to go home, I should start sleeping mainly on my back, which is the safest position for me at home.

Touch

- I don't need as much help to keep my arms and legs close to my body, but I still like to be swaddled.

Senses

- Shield me from bright lights.
- Loud noises still may upset me.
- I can see 8 to 10 inches away and am starting to follow objects.
- I can tell your voice from other people's voices. Sing finger-play songs and nursery rhymes like "Itsy, Bitsy, Spider" and "Old McDonald Had a Farm." Read and sing books to me to help me learn. I love that!

Feeding

- I will probably like a newborn pacifier since I am getting more mature.
- If I have tube feedings, offer me pacifier dippers. Be sure to pace me if I need it. This helps me remember to take breaths too.
- I may start to suck faster and stronger but be sure to slow me down since I am still learning.
- Learning to feed is the most complex thing I need to do to go home. Please be patient with me. The team is here to help you support me.

Social/Emotional

- I like to look at your face.
- I like to hear your voice.
- I love it when you are here to take care of me.

