

Dear Family,

We would like to congratulate you on the birth of your baby (or babies!). It is unlikely that you ever imagined spending your first moments here in the NICU. This experience may be one of your greatest challenges. We want you to know that you are not alone. ICU baby is a non-profit organization that provides support to families with babies in the NICU.

We have spent a lot of time talking with former NICU moms and dads, learning how we can ease your journey here. That led to this Premie Pack, which includes items those parents and medical staff felt are essential to your stay. We also have compiled their advice and wisdom and would like to share it with you:

**Listen Carefully.** You may feel like you're in a fog, especially the first few days in the NICU. Do your best to listen to your team of doctors and nurses so that you understand your baby's condition. Information is power.

**Take Notes & Ask Questions.** It's normal to feel overwhelmed and confused by the amount and complexity of information given to you. It is probably the first time that you are hearing many of the medical terms and conditions. We have provided a journal and list of NICU terms in your Premie Pack. Use it to write down details that your NICU team shares with you and to keep track of questions you have for them. There are never too many or bad questions. If you don't understand, ask the experts to explain again. You are your baby's advocate.

**Take Pictures.** Even though you don't want to spend your baby's first weeks or months in the hospital, it is the first chapter of his life. So document this journey. One day, when your baby's time in the NICU is a distant memory, you will be glad that you did.

**Look Forward.** The cause of many premature births can never be explained. Try not to spend your time wondering, "Why?" Instead focus your energy on what can be done now for your baby.

**Resist Comparisons.** You and your baby are unique. While many people will offer you advice and share premie stories, you and your NICU team have the most reliable insight on your baby's condition and development.

**Rest.** You are recovering from giving birth and need to take care of yourself. You may also be juggling work or other children at home. Don't feel like you have to spend 24 hours a day in the NICU. Eat well and drink plenty of fluids. Focus on your own recuperation and the well-being of your family at home. Your baby needs a healthy mom.

**Bond with Your Baby.** The NICU is generally a quiet place since preemies need their new environment to be similar to your womb. Maintain that peace by softly talking, singing, or reading a book to your baby. And do skin-to-skin or “Kangaroo” care when your baby is ready for it.

**Manage Expectations.** Sometimes life in the NICU can feel like two steps forward and one step backwards. You’ll have good and bad days, which is part of the process as your baby grows.

**Seek Support.** The journey for you and your newborn may be difficult, but a professional, spiritual or another type of support if you need help with insurance paperwork or financial issues, your social worker can offer support. In your folder, we’ve included a list of benefits and providers to help you navigate your stay. For all non-hospital related services ICU baby is here to support you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Wishing you and your baby the very best,  
The ICU baby Team