

Tips for Parents by Parents

Navigating the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

What is my role as a parent in caring for my baby while he/she is in the NICU?

To give him/her comfort as best you can, learn the status of your child's medical care from the medical team, and ask any questions you need to ask to understand the processes in the NICU. Parents should be involved in their infant's care as much as medically possible. You should begin participating in your infant's care by touching, talking, softly singing, feeding, diapering, etc. as soon as it is medically suitable to do so. This encourages bonding and infant development. The more you participate in your baby's care, the more comfortable and prepared you will be when your baby is ready to go home. Ask your child's nurse, doctor or nurse practitioner when you can begin to participate in his or her care. Someone on your baby's medical team is always available should you need to discuss anything with them.

What items can I bring from home for my baby?

You can bring items from home for your baby such as photographs, blankets and a small stuffed animal. Ask the nurses if you can put any of these items in the isolette.

Who will take care of my baby while he/she is in the NICU?

Attending physicians oversee all of the patient care in the NICU. Fellows, residents, nurse practitioners, nurses, medical students, social workers, child life specialists, dietitians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and physical and occupational therapists may also be part of your baby's team.

When do rounds occur?

Rounds take place every day between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM. Ask your baby's medical team to find out how you can participate in Family Centered Rounds.

Where will my baby be staying?

There are many patient rooms in the NICU. Some rooms are designated for more critical babies and new admissions. Your baby/babies may be moved to any room as his or her condition stabilizes/changes at any time of the day or night. Please feel free to ask at the front desk to see if your baby's room has changed.

Where can I eat in the hospital?

There are two places to eat in the hospital. Au Bon Pain, at the East 68th Street entrance (across from the Information Desk) and the Garden Café (main cafeteria) located on Level B (basement).

The Garden Café serves breakfast and lunch. Open Monday-Friday (closed holidays), 6:30 AM – 10:30 AM for breakfast, 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM for lunch, it is closed on weekends. Daily menu selections are available by calling (212) 746-MENU.

Au Bon Pain serves light refreshments including breakfast items, sandwiches and soups. Open Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM – 7:00 PM; Saturday & Sunday, 9:00 AM – 5:30 PM.

Meal vouchers are available for breastfeeding mothers. You can ask the nurse who is taking care of your baby that day to obtain them.

Where can I go to take a break from the NICU?

There are two family lounges on 6West. A “quiet lounge” is located just inside the security doors of the NICU; the other lounge is located just outside the NICU. This larger Family Lounge has vending machines, hot chocolate, coffee, magazines, televisions, a fish tank, and computer terminals with Internet access.

Are there any infant care classes given by the hospital?

Classes and seminars are held regularly at the hospital. Preparation for Parenthood offers classes regular throughout the week on breastfeeding and infant care in the hospital. The Komansky Center Family Advisory Council offers NICU parent luncheons on the third Thursday of every month. This is an opportunity to meet with other parents who share your experience. There are also workshops of particular interest to NICU parents which are held monthly. Fliers announcing the luncheons and seminars are given out 1-2 days in advance and are posted around the NICU, and a calendar of events is available on the FAC webpage.

What support systems are available to families in the NICU?

Here is a quick contact list for some of the key resources available:

- Komansky Center Family Advisory Council: (212) 746-6007 (leave a message)
- Pastoral Care: (212) 746-4690 or (212) 746-6971
- Social Work: (212) 746-3118
- Child Life: (212) 746-3518
- Preparation for Parenthood: (212) 746-3295 or (212) 746-3215
- Patient Resource Center: (646) 962-4472; located across the street in the Weill Greenberg Center, 1305 York Avenue (at East 70th Street), 2nd floor. Their hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

ABOUT THE FAC: The Komansky Center Family Advisory Council (FAC) is a group of dedicated parents and family members of pediatric patients who are committed to working with the Hospital staff and pediatric administration to provide family-centered care to all of the pediatric patients. If you would like to find out more about the Family Advisory Council, please call us at (212)746-6007.