

## **What to Expect When Expecting a NICU Stay**

### **NICU Environment**

- Overview of the NICU:
  - The NICU is a specialized unit of the hospital where critically ill and premature newborns are cared for.
  - This unit is staffed with uniquely trained healthcare professionals and advanced medical equipment and technology.
- Sights and Sounds:
  - In the NICU, you'll see and hear things like monitors, ventilators, IV equipment, incubators, and alarms.
  - These various sights and sounds are helping monitor and provide for your baby. They help the medical team provide the best care possible.

### **The NICU Team**

- Who will care for your baby:
  - The NICU team has many different players, you will likely meet the Neonatologist, Registered Nurse, Respiratory Therapist, Occupation Therapist, Speech Therapist, Registered Dietitian, Lactation support and potentially more.
  - These people are here to support both you and your baby in various ways.
- Role of Parents:
  - You are your baby's biggest advocate! Parents are a vital part of the NICU team. You will be encouraged to participate in your baby's care as much as possible.

### **Common Procedures and Tests**

- Routine Care:
  - Your baby will likely have a newborn screening (blood test), a hearing test and several labs drawn when they enter the NICU.
  - Throughout your stay, your baby may undergo regular testing such as labs, x-rays, and ultrasounds to monitor their condition.
  - These tests will vary depending on your baby, so it is important you speak with your care team.
- Feeding and Nutrition:
  - There are many ways to provide nutrients to your newborn while in the NICU. They may have an IV for Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN or nutrition that goes right into the vein), or a tube in their mouth or nose for tube feedings. You may be able to breastfeed your baby right away or begin pumping to provide breast milk.
  - The hospital may provide donor breastmilk, human milk-based fortifier, or formula as your baby grows.

### **Emotional Support and Resources**

- Support For Parents:
  - The NICU can be an emotional place. Support can be found through social workers, counselors, and parent support groups.
  - If you're feeling like you need support, make sure you communicate this with your baby's care team.
- Visiting Hours and Policies:
  - Visiting guidelines vary from depending on facility and individual baby's care. Check with your NICU staff for specific guidelines.

### **Hospital to Home – Discharge!**

- Preparing to go home:

- As your baby nears discharge, the NICU team will work with you to prepare for the transition home. This will include any special training needed for your baby.