Lucy’s Journey
A NICU alumni story

From Lucy’s Mom:

**LUCY WAS BORN** after my water broke following a routine doctor’s appointment. At first, I struggled with a lot of guilt about her birth. It took me a long time to understand that this wasn’t my fault. I grieved the loss of being pregnant, having a baby shower, packing a bag for the hospital, and leaving the hospital with our baby.

Early on, I struggled to understand the terms and processes in the NICU. My husband and I attended rounds every day so that we could be part of Lucy’s care decisions. Language that at first seemed foreign quickly became our daily vocabulary.

The thing that got me through our NICU stay the most was holding Lucy skin to skin as long as I was allowed. I read to her, sang to her, told her stories, or just sat quietly, feeling her breathe.

While Lucy’s stay was fairly uneventful, we struggled greatly with feeding issues. I wanted to breastfeed, but it was so hard for Lucy and we had very discouraging days. But we felt very supported by the nurses and lactation consultants. I encourage any moms who want to breastfeed to let people at the NICU know – they are an amazing resource.

I think families often hit a point in their NICU stay when they see the finish line but can’t quite get there. We had learned to care for our daughter, knew her noises and cues, and we wanted her home. And yet, I also started to enjoy being at the NICU. You get to know the nurses and staff well and it becomes your reality. I admit, even now, there are days when I find myself missing the NICU and being surrounded by such supportive people.

We were discharged 3 days before Lucy’s due date.

Walking out of the hospital with her is a memory I will never forget. We took Lucy on her first walk around the neighborhood and held our daughter free of wires and alarms for the very first time. It was amazing.
When we came home, Lucy was 100% bottle-fed. I really wanted to breastfeed, and I didn’t always understand why it wasn’t working, but I followed her cues. Lucy was always very clear when it wasn’t working for her. Over time, it got easier. Finally, 2 months after her due date, she was 100% breastfed. Getting to this point was likely the biggest accomplishment of my life, no exaggeration. There were many feeds when I thought it was time to quit trying. But I pass on the advice I received: “Don’t quit on a bad day. If you are going to quit, quit after a really great feed.”

Lucy is thriving at home. She loves music, baths, books, walks, rides in the car, and still loves snuggling for hours on end. She is the center of our world. Looking back, we wouldn’t change a thing.

From Lucy’s mom: I wish someone had told me that even with all of the hard days and sadness, there is something truly wonderful and magical about the NICU. It can be a really wonderful place.

From Lucy’s dad: That so many people would be there to take such good care of our daughter.

What is one survival tip you would like to pass on to a new NICU parent?

From Lucy’s mom: Follow your gut and try to set aside advice and comments from others. You know who you want to visit with, how much time you should spend with your baby, and how to get through this experience. Trust your gut.

From Lucy’s dad: Remember to eat. It’s surprisingly easy to get caught up in cares and snuggles and medical stuff and forget. Being hungry makes everything harder.

What is one thing you wish someone had told you about the NICU?

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