

Balancing Act

Time in the NICU and time at home

Being with your baby in the NICU is very important. But, it is impossible for you to spend every minute of every day in the NICU. This handout offers some tips on how to manage your time while your baby is in the hospital.

Tips from Professionals

- Time with your baby is very important, but you do not need to spend every minute with your baby while they are in the hospital. When you can be in the NICU, use your time well, but try not to feel guilty or worry about the times you are away.
- Plan your visits so you can be with your baby for as many feedings as possible. This gives you quality bonding time and helps you learn how to care for and feed your baby.
- If you have other responsibilities that keep you from visiting as often as you would like, ask trusted family and friends to help you.
- If you are spending a lot of time in the hospital, try to take some breaks. Do this for yourself, and also for your baby! Time away from the hospital can help you feel better, and give you more energy to care for your baby.



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Tips from Other NICU Families

Let People Help You

It can be hard, but learning how to ask for and accept help will make things a lot easier for you and for your baby. This is a unique time in your life, when you may need help more than at any other time.

Choose a Spokesperson

Caring friends and loved ones want to know what is going on with your baby, but keeping everyone updated can be exhausting. If you choose someone you trust to be your spokesperson, you only need to keep one person informed. Your spokesperson can then forward the information on to others. This can save you energy and time.

When you choose your spokesperson, be sure to be very clear about:

- What information you want to share
- Who you want to receive the information
- How to share the information, such as by blog, Facebook, phone calls, CarePages, CaringBridge, or email

Be with Your Partner and Family

- It is vital for your health and for the health of your relationship, that you spend some time with your partner outside of the NICU. Try to find time for just the two of you—and try not to spend all your time talking about the NICU!
- If you have other children, it may be helpful to create a written schedule of your NICU visits, so that your children know where you expect to be and when. This can help them adjust to their parents splitting their time between them and their new sibling. If you do create a schedule, don't be hard on yourself if you can't always stick to it. Be flexible!
- Your other children will also need to be reassured that even though things are hard right now, it will be OK. Remind them that they are being cared for and that you are thinking of them often.

Find Your Strength, Set Your Limits

You can't do everything, so don't expect to! Be kind to yourself. It will take time to learn what is best for your baby, and what will work best for your family.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit:
206.598.4606

Resource: Hand to Hold's Resource Library *Balancing Home and the NICU* and *Preemies 2nd edition* by Dana Wechsler Linden, Emma Trenti Paroli, and Mia Wechsler Doron