

Looking after yourself when your baby is in the NICU

Parenting in the NICU can be difficult.

Learn things you can do to support yourself, and when to get help.



Photo submitted by parent Michelle Ross

What you need to know.

Parents and partners experience many different feelings in the NICU. Being worried, stressed, scared, or tearful are some common feelings. There are things that other parents have found helpful to feel less stressed and more in control. Remember to be kind to yourself.

6 things that can help you.



Hold your baby skin-to-skin.

It can lower stress for you and your baby, and helps to build your confidence as a parent.



Get hands-on with everyday care.

Be part of your baby's care plan (i.e., feeding, bathing, diaper changes, mouth care).



Share your baby's care as a parent team.

Together you will feel more supported and less alone.



Join a peer support group.

This will help you feel more supported and less alone. (canadianpreemies.org has several groups)



Give yourself some quiet time.

Walk in daylight, write in a journal, have a meal, or take a break with your partner.



Let your baby's care team support you.

Their help and information makes it easier to be part of your baby's care team.

You can also participate virtually (Zoom, phone calls)

You can be actively involved in your baby's care by joining virtual rounds and online family meetings. Ask about being part of your baby's care team to create a care plan for your baby.

It is important to know when to ask for help.

You are not alone. Reaching out early is important as support is there.

If you or your partner are feeling low, or your mood is heavy and does not improve, please tell your baby's nurse, doctor, or a NICU social worker.



Resources to support you and your family.

Ask your baby's nurse about what supports and programs are available at your hospital.

- Access free peer support groups, a free mental health group, and information through CPBF. They are here to support you along the way.
- Speak to your family health care provider, midwife, or social worker. You can also connect with your community health programs, or with other graduate NICU parents through CPBF.



Visit us online for more information on NICU parent support, plus other useful resources and programs focused on premature babies and their families.

CPBF  Canadian Premature Babies Foundation
canadianpreemies.org