The NICU staff

There are several people who may work together in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to help you and your baby. They are highly trained to work with babies who need specialized medical care. Below is a brief list of NICU staff members and what they do. The types of staff and their titles differ with each NICU, so you might not see all the people listed here.

**Neonatologist/Intensivist** — A doctor with special training to treat babies who have medical problems. This doctor will oversee your baby’s care, but may consult with other types of doctors based on your baby’s needs.

**Neonatal Advanced Practitioner** — This person is a neonatal nurse practitioner (NNP), an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) or a physician’s assistant (PA) who has pursued further education and training in order to provide special medical care for your baby and works under the supervision of a neonatologist.

**Nurse** — The types of nurses and their functions vary with each NICU. Bedside nurses are trained to care for babies in the NICU and will be involved in the daily care of your baby. Nurses will perform tasks such as bathing, feeding, checking vital signs and giving medicines. They can answer questions about your baby and will show you how you may help in your baby’s care.

**Case Worker** — This person helps manage many aspects of your baby’s care and long-term needs. A case worker often is trained in social work and can help connect you with resources you may need along the way, such as home medical supplies and services to help with learning, motor skills, growth and counseling. Financial concerns also can be discussed with a case worker.

**Other types of doctors** — Based on your baby’s special needs, he or she may be seen by doctors who focus on certain body systems.

**This type of doctor works with these body systems and/or functions:**
- Cardiologist — the heart and structures that connect with it
- Developmental Pediatrician — the growth, learning and emotional health needs of infants and children
- Endocrinologist — the endocrine system (many glands throughout the body that produce hormones)
- Gastroenterologist — the organs involved with digestion, such as the stomach, intestines and gall bladder
• Geneticist — the health or physical problems that are passed through families
• Infectious Disease Specialist — infections that may affect the baby's well-being
• Nephrologist — the kidneys and structures that connect with them
• Neurologist — the nervous system, including the brain
• Ophthalmologist — the eyes
• Pulmonologist — the lungs and structures involving breathing
• Radiologist — reads x-rays and image scans to help diagnose and treat medical problems
• Surgeon — there are many types of surgeons, each type focuses on certain body systems and performs invasive surgeries

Others who may be involved in your baby’s care and attend to your family's needs:

**Audiologist** — This professional has special training in testing and treating problems related to hearing. Before your baby leaves the NICU, your baby may be screened for hearing loss. You may be advised to take your baby to an audiologist if tests show your baby may need additional evaluation.

**Hearing Screener** — This person may test your baby's hearing using audiological technology known as the auditory brainstem response (ABR) test.

**Counselor** — This person has special training to help patients who are distressed and/or who need help with non-medical problems. Having a baby in the NICU is a stressful time for any parent and having someone to talk with may be helpful.

**Dietitian** — This professional focuses on special nutrition needs your baby may have.

**Lactation Consultant** — This person is a health care provider with special training in breastfeeding issues, such as the unique challenges that may occur when breastfeeding premature babies.

**Resident** — This is a doctor who has completed a medical degree and is training to practice in a certain field of medicine. In the NICU, a resident is training to become a pediatrician (a doctor who treats children), a family practitioner, or an OB/GYN and is guided by doctors in the unit.

**Respiratory Therapist** — This person helps with lung and/or breathing problems, and with care that involves a ventilator, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) or oxygen.

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**You are a vital partner in your baby’s care:** The NICU team is here to take good care of you, your baby and family members. As a parent, you are a vital member of the care team. You can take an active role in your baby’s care by asking questions and learning what you can do to help your infant.

**Take a closer look at these Pediatrix topics**

► breastfeeding - C1 - Caring for your baby in the NICU: feeding
► ventilator - A2 - Tools of the NICU

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This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with a health care professional if you have any questions about the health of your baby.