



# Your Baby's Development

We understand that while your baby is in the NICU, their development is one of your primary concerns. Supporting your baby's development is one of our priorities as well. Babies with BPD are at risk for developmental problems. These may be related to being born early, complications of prematurity such as having a brain bleed or severe vision problems, and having severe lung disease that may require being on the ventilator for a long time.

Babies in our NICU have their developmental needs evaluated frequently, and we have many team members and services available to focus on your baby's needs and progress. Some of the developmental problems our team watches for in the NICU include:

- Problems with posture
- Movement
- Visual skills
- Pre-reaching skills
- Feeding skills
- Sleeping
- Paying attention to sights and sounds

Most of the NICU Developmental team's services will be provided as your baby's medical condition allows. In combination, these therapies can help your baby's development while they are in the hospital and after they are discharged.

For example, there may be times when your baby is ill or has difficulty breathing, and working with a developmental therapist should be rescheduled. If this occurs, your baby's NICU team and/or developmental therapists will assess your baby regularly to decide when developmental therapies can begin or continue.

**Our NICU developmental team also includes a NICU Developmental Specialist - a nurse with special training in supporting NICU infant development. This Specialist will provide a developmental care plan specific for your baby with your insights and preferences in mind.**

Developmental assessments used to form your child's developmental care plan may include:

1. Observations of your baby during routine nursing care
2. Discussions between you and the developmental therapists caring for your baby
3. Sleep evaluations
4. Use of activity tolerance scores to guide respiratory support adjustments

Sleep evaluations are typically done after a baby is three months older than their due date, if they are having trouble with sleep, or if they continue to have pauses in breathing.

## Our NICU Developmental Team includes:

- Audiology
- Child Life
- Music Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Developmental Specialist



## PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION

You may be concerned about your baby's long-term development and problems that may occur once your baby goes home from the NICU.

Some of these problems seen in infants with BPD include:

- Cerebral palsy
- Problems with motor skills and coordination
- Intellectual and learning problems
- Deficits or Hearing loss
- Problems with vision
- Problems with oral feedings

Babies with the most severe BPD have more of these issues and developmental outcomes that will require extra support, therapy, and attention.



In addition, some babies with tracheostomies, who have the most severe BPD, may have issues with social and language skills. However, we believe that getting a tracheostomy sooner may:

- Improve developmental outcomes for some children who have the most severe BPD
- Allow you to interact more with your baby
- Allow us to provide your baby with more frequent developmental enrichment

When your baby is ready to go home, we will again evaluate their needs for developmental follow-up and therapies, and will make referrals for future therapies.

**The NICU-Cardiac Neurodevelopment Program tracks the developmental progress of NICU infants until the age of five.**

We will also refer your baby for any therapies they may need through Early Intervention Services. Because it may take some time for Early Intervention Services to begin, we may have your baby see physical, occupational or speech therapy at one of our outpatient clinics for a short time after discharge. It is important to continue these therapies to monitor and treat any developmental delays or issues.

**If you have any questions about our plans or how we hope to implement them, please contact your medical team so we get the right resources and information for you and your family.**