

# 10 Ways to Support a Family in the NICU

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) can be a very stressful and overwhelming environment for parents. Parents do not take time to ask for help and finding support can sometimes be difficult. At the same time, loved ones desire to help but do not know where to start.

## 1 - BE PRESENT

With the range of emotions that parents go through during their NICU journey, just be present. There may be frustration, anger or sadness depending on the situation of any given day and just being there and providing an ear to listen or a shoulder to cry will be extremely comforting for the parents.

## 2 - OFFER CONGRATULATIONS, NOT SYMPATHY

Even under difficult circumstances, premature babies are a blessing and offering congratulations will mean so much to new parents.

## 3 - GIVE A JOURNAL

Daily tracking of weight, ventilator settings, blood gases, etc. quickly become second nature. With the wide range of emotions that accompany the journey in the NICU, it is important for families to document their story.

## 4 - GIVE A GAS CARD

Sometimes families who deliver premature babies do not live within close proximity to the hospital. Making a lengthy drive back and forth to the hospital for a long period of time can be a financial burden for the family.

## 5 - GIVE THEM SPACE

It is human nature to want to visit new babies in the hospital, but there is a lot of stress in the first few days/months as the babies are fighting for their lives. Give the family some space and let them tell you when the time is right to visit the NICU.

## 6 - PREPARE A HOME COOKED MEAL

Whether the stay in the NICU is weeks or months, a home cooked meal is always a blessing!

## 7 - PROVIDE SNACKS

Doctors make rounds at varying times and parents want to make sure they are present during this time. Having snacks on hand can ensure they do not have to leave the bedside to grab a bite to eat.

## 8- HELP WITH THE TO-DO LIST

Helping with laundry and chores at home will allow the parents to spend more time in the NICU.

## 9 - ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO GET FRESH AIR

It is difficult for parents to think about themselves but it is vital. Offer to sit with the babies while they go outside and get some fresh air even if just for a few minutes.

## 10 - OFFER SUPPORT AFTER BABY COMES HOME

The medical journey doesn't end when the baby comes home from the NICU. In many cases, the babies need to be sheltered from the outside world as much as possible while they grow stronger. Just understand and offer the same support you gave while they were in the NICU.