

We help your baby thrive in the NICU and as you transition to home

Feeding is critical to thriving

Your baby's ability to feed successfully is a key measure of when he or she is ready to leave the NICU. That's why we focus the efforts of a team of nurses, doctors and therapists to help ensure long-term feeding success.

As your baby continues to mature while in the NICU, her needs for successful feeding may change too. The feeding team will work with you and your baby to ensure she can feed safely, whether you bottle-feed or breast-feed long-term. Talk to the feeding team about your preferences.

As you get closer to taking your baby home, it's especially important to talk about the bottles you plan to use. The rate that milk flows through the nipple makes a big difference in how well your baby feeds. Our team will help you understand how to choose the best bottles and nipples for your baby.



How to read **your baby's body language**

Babies that are relaxed and content feed better. In this state, they are also more comfortable being held, cuddled, and interacting with others.



If your baby shows some or all of these signs, you'll know she is ready to be cuddled or fed:

- Smiling
- Cooing
- Relaxed arms or legs
- Limited movements
- Comfortably awake
- Hands to face
- Quiet eye opening
- Sucking
- Flexed body

If your baby feels some kind of stress or distress, he is less likely to feed well. If your baby shows some or all of these signs below, he will need some kind of support from you.

- Yawning
- Hiccuping
- Spitting up
- Skin color changes
- Looking away
- "Stop" hand motions
- Torso arching
- Stiff, straight legs
- Rapid or slowed pulse
- Holding breath
- Frantic movements
- Eyes or face squeezed tight, grimacing

+ **Flip the page** to learn all the ways our therapists can help you and your baby, both in the hospital and as you return home.



Feeding **skills and strengths**

While he or she is in the NICU, your baby may need therapy to gain the skills and strength he needs to feed successfully. **Proper nourishment is critical to your baby's growth and development.**



What do NICU therapists do?

Our NICU team includes occupational, physical and speech therapists. Their primary goal is to ensure your baby develops as best as she can, both in the NICU and as you return home. Successful feeding is a key element in a baby's development.

If your baby needs it, our therapists will evaluate her current abilities. Each baby's needs will be different, and not every baby needs all three kinds of therapy. Our therapists will create a plan tailored to your baby's needs. They will also teach you to ensure she continues to feed and develop well at home.

Occupational Therapists will	Physical Therapists will	Speech Therapists will
<p>Teach you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move and interact with your baby in ways that are calm and comfortable for both of you• Know when your baby is ready for touch, movement, and visual stimulation• Recognize when he is ready to feed• Know which bottles will work best for your baby at what stage of development• How to make each feeding comfortable, positive and safe	<p>Teach you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position baby to support head shape, muscle development and sleep• Recognize your baby's signs of stress or distress• Help your baby feel more relaxed, comfortable and ready to feed	<p>Teach you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help your baby breast and bottle feed, improve feeding skills and swallow safely• Choose the appropriate bottle and nipple flow rate for your baby• Recognize if your baby is having trouble swallowing
<p>Work with your baby to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen his arms, legs and body so he can move freely and play with toys• Help your baby build head and body control by sitting upright and lying on his tummy	<p>Work with your baby to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage development through activities and exercises, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lifting her head while lying on her belly- Controlling her head while sitting- Rolling to her side• Exercise and stretch tight muscles	<p>Work with your baby to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop mouth and swallowing skills and strength• Stimulate your baby's speech and language development

