FREE PRINTABLE · JUST IN CASE

Just-in-case NICU packing list

For you, for pumping, and for your baby

You may never need this list. If your baby does spend time in the NICU, it's one less thing to think about.

Some babies need special care after birth: to watch their blood sugar after a pregnancy with diabetes, for example, or because they arrived early.[1,2] Every NICU has its own rules, so check with the nurses before you bring things in for your baby.[3,4]

FOR PUMPING

If you plan to give breast milk

- [ ] Your own pump and clean parts, if your hospital encourages it[7]
- [ ] A spare set of pump parts
- [ ] A small cooler bag for carrying milk
- [ ] A hands-free pumping bra
- [ ] Nipple cream[7]
- [ ] A big refillable water bottle

Pumping can give a baby in the NICU the benefits of breast milk.[6] Ask early for the hospital's pump and the lactation team's help, and ask about the pump you'll use at home.[4]

FOR SKIN-TO-SKIN

Holding your baby on your chest

- [ ] A shirt or robe that opens down the front[5,3]
- [ ] A neck pillow for long stretches in the chair[3]

Both parents can do skin-to-skin.[5] Ask the nurse when you can start.

FOR YOU

Long days, and some nights

- [ ] A change of clothes, and stain remover[3]
- [ ] A sweater or jacket you can take off, since rooms vary in temperature[3]
- [ ] Slippers, plus comfortable shoes for walking between units[3]
- [ ] Unscented hand lotion, for all the hand washing[3]
- [ ] Toothbrush, face wash and a hairbrush[3]
- [ ] Your own pillow and blanket[3,4]
- [ ] A long phone charging cable[4]
- [ ] Snacks for the hours between meals
- [ ] A laundry bag[3]
- [ ] Headphones, a book or something to do with your hands[4]
- [ ] Your own medications, once you have been discharged
- [ ] Cash or a card for parking and meals

FOR YOUR BABY

Only when the nurses say it is OK

- [ ] Outfits that open fully with snaps or a zipper, so wires and tubes can stay put[3]
- [ ] Your name or initials on every tag[3]
- [ ] A soft baby blanket that smells like you[3]
- [ ] Baby lotion and a nail file[3]
- [ ] A going-home outfit in preemie size
- [ ] Photos from home for the bedside[4]
- [ ] A book to read aloud to your baby
- [ ] An installed car seat, for the day you go home

Most NICUs provide newborn and preemie clothing, so you don't need to buy much ahead of time.[3]

TO KEEP TRACK

NICU notes

A notebook helps you keep questions, names, feedings and milestones in one place.[3,4] Start here.

NICU phone number

Best times to call or visit

When rounds happen

Our nurse today

Parking, meals and where to sleep

Who sends updates to family and friends

ROUNDS

Questions for the team

Write them down as they come to you, and bring them to rounds or your next call.

DAY BY DAY

What the team told us

Date	Who we talked to	What they said	What we want to ask next

You're part of your baby's team

You can ask questions, share your concerns and take part in decisions about your baby's care. If you live far from the hospital, ask the staff about free or low-cost places to stay nearby.[8]

Your baby's NICU team knows your baby best. Bring your questions to them.

SOURCES, CHECKED NOVEMBER 2026

1 NIDDK (NIH), "Pregnancy if You Have Diabetes". www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/diabetes-pregnancy

2 American Academy of Pediatrics (HealthyChildren.org), "Preemie". www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/default.aspx

3 UnityPoint Health, "What to Bring to the NICU". www.unitypoint.org/news-and-articles/what-to-bring-to-the-nicu-printable-checklist

4 Vanderbilt Health, "High-risk delivery and NICU stays: What to pack in a hospital bag". my.vanderbilthealth.com/high-risk-delivery-and-nicu-stays-what-to-pack-in-a-hospital-bag/

5 American Academy of Pediatrics (HealthyChildren.org), "Skin-to-Skin Contact". www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/About-Skin-to-Skin-Care.aspx

6 American Academy of Pediatrics (HealthyChildren.org), "Pumping & Expressing Breast Milk for Your Premature Baby". www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/expressing-breast-milk-for-your-preemie.aspx

7 Cleveland Clinic, "What To Pack in Your Hospital Bag". health.clevelandclinic.org/what-to-pack-in-hospital-bag

8 March of Dimes, "Your baby's NICU stay". www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/neonatal-intensive-care-unit-nicu/your-babys-nicu-stay

LONG AWAITED
BIRTH SUPPORT

longawaitedbirth.com
Text or call (478) 974-3434