

Here is just some of what you may come across in your prematurity journey:

Acidosis is caused by the accumulation of waste acids in the body as a result of either breathing difficulties or poor functioning in metabolic systems.

Anemia is a condition where the number of red cells in the blood is lower than normal. **Crit** or **hematocrit** is the test used to measure the percentage of red blood cells in relation to the total volume of blood.

Apnea (also called apneic episodes or apneic spells) is an interruption in breathing that lasts 15 seconds or longer. Some preemies need manual stimulation or drug therapy to restart or maintain normal breathing patterns.

Adjusted age, also known as corrected age, is a preemie's chronological age minus the number of weeks she was born early.

Bili lights and **biliblankets** are used to treat jaundice, which is common in all newborns. This may also be called **phototherapy**.

Blood gases are the measure of levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in a baby's blood.

Bradycardia is a slowed heart rate. **Brady** episodes are usually temporary and often associated with apnea in preemies.

Brainstem auditory evoked response test is a hearing test for newborns.

Bronchopulmonary dysplasia, abbreviated BPD and sometimes called **Chronic Lung Disease**, is lung damage and scarring that can be caused by prolonged periods of mechanical ventilation.

Cardiopulmonary monitors (also called cardio-respiratory monitors) track a baby's heart and breathing rates. An **apnea monitor** detects interruptions in breathing.

CAT/CT scans (short for computed tomography scans) use a narrow band of radiation paired with computer imaging systems to produce precise pictures of tissues.

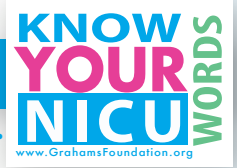
Catheters are small, thin plastic tubes that deliver fluid internally or are used to remove fluid from a baby's body. **Broviac catheters** are designed to stay in place for weeks or months.

Cerebral palsy is a group of conditions caused by damage to one or more areas of the brain during fetal development, birth, or in infancy. It affects control of movement, posture, flexibility, and muscle strength.

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) delivers oxygen through nasal cannula or endotracheal tubes to help a preemie breathe by keeping the air sacs of the lungs open.

NICU GLOSSARY

Learning as much as you can about the NICU can make it seem less scary and more reassuring.



Developmentally delayed is a term used to describe infants, toddlers, and children who haven't reached the milestones expected for their age groups.

Edema is puffiness or swelling caused by fluid retention.

Endotracheal tubes are small plastic tubes that pass through a baby's nose or mouth into the windpipe to deliver oxygen via a ventilator.

Exchange transfusions are a special kind of blood transfusion, often used to treat severe jaundice, in which some of a preemie's blood is removed and replaced with a donor's blood.

Feeding tubes help babies who are too small or weak to feed by mouth get the nutrition they need. These may be inserted into the stomach via the nose or the mouth, and typically do not cause babies any discomfort. This way of feeding a preemie is known as **gavage feeding**.

Gastroesophageal reflux happens when the contents of a baby's stomach moves back up into the esophagus, usually due to an immature junction between the two. This is very common among preemies.

Gastronomy tube or **g-tube** feeding is a way of delivering nutrition through a surgically created opening in the stomach.

Hydrocephalus, sometimes called water on the brain, is an accumulation of fluid in the ventricles of the brain. In preemies, this condition is often caused by intraventricular hemorrhage.

Hypoglycemia is the medical term for low blood sugar.

I&O, which stands for **input and output**, is the measurement of both fluids given during feedings and the amount excreted in urine and stool.

Ileal perforation occurs in extremely premature babies when a hole in the small bowel occurs spontaneously.

Infant warmers (also called **radiant warmers**) are open beds with overhead heaters used to maintain a preemie's body temperature.

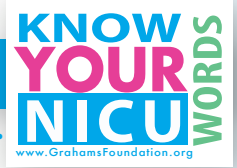
Intracranial hemorrhaging is bleeding within the skull. In preemies, this usually occurs in the ventricles (**IVH**) though it can happen in any part of the brain, and may cause intellectual or physical difficulties.

Isolettes and **incubators** are also used to regulate temperature but are enclosed, and also protect babies from germs and noise.

IVs and **infusion pumps** help deliver fluids and medications directly into a preemie's bloodstream. An IV can be placed in a baby's scalp, hand, arm, foot, or leg. **PICC lines** or **central lines** are placed in larger vein when more medications or fluids are needed or they're needed for a longer period of time.

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Jaundice is the yellowing of the skin and eyes caused by the accumulation of a normal waste product called bilirubin.

Kangaroo care is a way of holding a preemie with skin-to-skin contact that can be incredibly comforting to both parents and babies.

MRI scans (short for magnetic resonance imaging) use strong magnets paired with computer imaging systems to produce extremely detailed pictures of tissues.

Nasal cannulas are soft plastic tubes that go around a preemie's head and under her nose where **nasal prongs** deliver oxygen.

Necrotizing Enterocolitis, commonly abbreviated as **NEC**, is swelling, redness, and tenderness of the intestine caused by decreased blood supply or infection. Severity varies from case to case.

Neonatologists are pediatricians who have trained specifically to care for premature, sick, and special needs newborns.

Osteopenia of prematurity, abbreviated **OOP**, is a decrease in the amount of calcium and phosphorus in a baby's bones that causes them to become brittle and weak.

Patent ductus arteriosus or **PDA** refers to the incomplete closure of the ductus arteriosus, a blood vessel connecting the pulmonary artery to the aorta. Usually this vessel closes soon after birth; when it remains open, it can be treated medically or surgically.

Persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn, abbreviated **PPHN**, refers to high blood pressure in the lungs that causes blood vessels in the lungs to narrow. This can lead to breathing problems.

Physiologic monitors are newer model monitors which are computer systems that can record information, review trends, and filter out false alarms.

Pneumothorax is a condition in which air from a preemie's lungs leaks out into the space between the chest cavity and the lungs themselves. Larger leaks may require surgical repair.

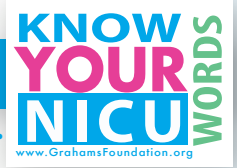
Pulmonary interstitial emphysema occurs in babies on ventilators when bubbles form around the alveoli of the lungs.

Pulse oximeters monitor a baby's blood oxygen level using a tiny infrared light attached to the foot or the hand.

Retinopathy of prematurity or **ROP** is scarring and abnormal growth of blood vessels in the retina. Because the retina does not mature until close to term, the growth of blood vessels can be altered by many factors related to prematurity.

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RSV or **respiratory syncytial virus** is a virus that causes respiratory tract infections that are particularly dangerous in preemies and infants with chronic lung conditions.

Respiratory distress syndrome or **RDS** is a serious breathing issue caused by lung immaturity and the absence of lung surfactant in preemies.

Sepsis is a widespread infection of the blood usually treated with antibiotics. It may also be called **systemic inflammatory response syndrome**.

Specialists you may meet in the NICU include neonatal clinical nurses, respiratory therapists, occupational and physical therapists, social workers, lactation consultants, dieticians, apnea specialists, surgeons, and pediatric specialists who deal with very specific conditions.

Surfactant is a detergent-like substance used to keep the tiny air sacs in a preemie's lungs from collapsing.

Tachycardia is a faster than usual heart rate.

Tachypnea is a faster than usual respiratory rate.

Temperature probes are sensors taped to a preemie's stomach to monitor her skin temperature and calibrate the temperature in an isolette or infant warmer.

Ultrasound uses sound waves to create images of tissue to diagnose a range of conditions.

Echocardiogram is a specialized form of ultrasound focused on the heart.

Umbilical catheters are inserted into the belly button and are used to painlessly draw blood or give a baby nutrition, fluids, medicines, or a transfusion.

Ventilators and **respirators** help preemies breath via a tube that pumps warm, humidified air into the lungs. Sometimes during testing an **oxyhood** may be used. **High-frequency ventilation** is a type of ventilation designed to be gentler on delicate lungs.



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