

SHARING YOUR NICU STORY

Sharing your NICU experience can build connection with others but can also cause discomfort when you are not sure what to say. This guide can help you decide how you want to share your story.

Who do I share with?

Emotional support

- Who has been helpful in the past when you have gone through hard things?
- Who has been through similar experiences or may understand the challenges?
- Who are the good listeners?

Logistical support

- Are neighbors and friends able to help with things like letting the dog out, caring for other children, or dropping off meals? Identify those in your life who will be helpful and share with them accordingly.
- Do you need to tell an employer? Does the NICU stay affect your work schedule or leave plans? Ask about extended leave options you can take during this time.

Boundaries around sharing

- Limit the information you share with people you don't feel as close with. Some parents find it helpful to save a simple pre-written text in the notes app of their phone to copy and paste when needed.

Thank you for your support. It would be so helpful if you would be willing to collect the mail this week.

It's hard to talk about the details but we will share updates as we are ready.

We appreciate you thinking of us. Things are challenging right now and we are focused on our baby's health.



What do I share?

Share joy

- Consider simply sharing the excitement of the birth.

We're excited to introduce our baby! We're in the NICU right now and are focused on the baby, but we wanted to share the good news about their arrival.

Share limited information

- Medical information can get complex! You might not want to get into all the medical details (or even understand all the details yourself).

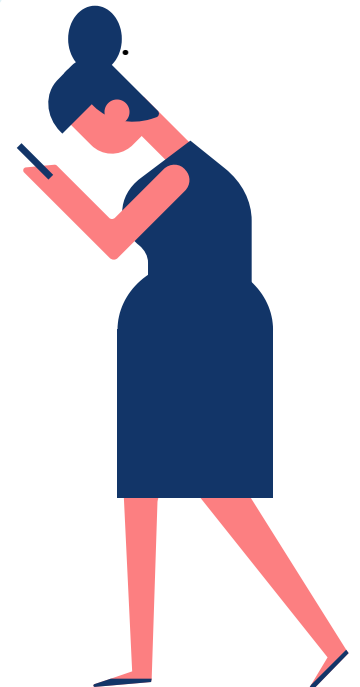
Our baby is having a little trouble breathing right now, so we're in the NICU to get some extra help until their lungs develop a bit more.

Share it all

- Some parents feel like it's helpful to share all the details of their experience with others.
- When sharing, consider if the person you are sharing with is in a place where they can hear the details of your experience and respond supportively.

Share what you need

- Keep in mind, people might not be sure what to say when they hear the news of your baby's NICU situation. Expressions of optimism may feel incomplete to you. If someone is too serious, it might seem as if they are not excited for you.
- If there are things that would be good to hear from loved ones, it's okay to be direct in sharing what would be most helpful.



How do I share?

Schedule lunch with a friend

- Some parents find it helpful to have a designated time to meet up with a friend or family member to share their experience. Use this as a time to recharge and gain support.

Delegate a person to share updates

- Provide updates to a trusted person and have them share those updates on your behalf.

Use social media

- Some families enjoy sharing their journey and like to document their NICU time using social media. This can be a useful way of updating loved ones all at the same time.



When do I share?

It's okay to keep things private until you feel ready to share

- Consider small ways to maintain social connection and support during this time. Research shows that social connection can be particularly beneficial for individuals during times of extreme stress, especially during the postnatal period.
- Taking a break does not mean you are shutting yourself off from communication altogether. If you notice that you are pulling away from friends and family completely, consider seeking help from a trusted resource, such as your physician or a mental health professional.

