

BREIF VIEW ON NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

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Introduction

The birth of a baby is a wonderful and very complex process. Many physical and emotional changes occur for both mother and baby. A baby must make many physical adjustments to life outside the mother's body. Before birth, the baby depends on functions from the mother. These include breathing, eating, elimination of waste, and immune protection. When a baby leaves the womb, its body systems must change.

New born babies who need intensive medical care are often put in a special area of the hospital called the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The NICU has advanced technology and trained healthcare professionals to give special care for the tiniest patients. NICUs may also care areas for babies who are not as sick but do need specialized nursing care. Some hospitals don't have the staff for a NICU and babies must be moved to another hospital. Babies who need intensive care do better if they are born in a hospital with a NICU than if they are moved after birth.

Which babies need special care?

Most babies admitted to the NICU are preterm (born before 37 weeks of pregnancy), have low birth weight (less than 5.5 pounds), or have a health condition that needs special care. In the U.S., nearly half a million babies are born preterm. Many of these babies also have low birth weights. Twins, triplets, and other multiples often are admitted to the NICU. This is because they tend to be born earlier and smaller than single birth babies. Babies with health conditions such as breathing trouble, heart problems, infections, or birth defects are also cared for in the NICU.

Equipment

Incubator: It is an apparatus used to maintain environmental conditions suitable for a neonate (newborn baby). It is used in preterm births or for some ill full-term babies. There is additional equipment used to evaluate and treat sick neonates. These include:

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Blood pressure monitor: The blood pressure monitor is a machine that's connected to a small cuff which wrapped around the arm or leg of the patient. This cuff automatically takes the blood pressure and displays the data for review by providers.

Oxygen hood: This is a clear box that fits over the baby's head and supplies oxygen. This is used for babies who can still breathe but need some respiratory support.

Ventilator: This is a breathing machine that delivers air to the lungs. Babies who are severely ill will receive this intervention. Typically, the ventilator takes the role of the lungs while treatment is administered to improve lung and circulatory function.

Aims/Goals of neonatal intensive care

- To improve the conditions of critically ill neonates keeping in mind the survival of neonate so as to reduce the neonatal mortality and morbidity.
- To maintain the function of pulmonary, cardiovascular, renal and nervous system.
- To monitor the heartbeat, body temperature, blood pressure and central venous pressure.