Medical Conditions - Introduction

The birth of a baby is a wonderful yet very complex process. Many physical and emotional changes occur for mother and baby.

A baby must make many physical adjustments to life outside the mother’s body. Leaving the uterus means that a baby can no longer depend on the mother’s circulation and placenta for important physiologic functions. Before birth, breathing, eating, elimination of waste, and immunologic protection all came from the mother. When a baby enters the world, many body systems change dramatically from the way they functioned during fetal life:

• The lungs must breathe air.
• The cardiac and pulmonary circulation changes.
• The digestive system must begin to process food and excrete waste.
• The kidneys must begin working to balance fluids and chemicals in the body and excrete waste.
• The liver and immunologic systems must begin functioning independently.

Your baby’s body systems must work together in a new way. Sometimes, a baby has difficulty making the transition to the world. Being born prematurely, having a difficult delivery, or defects in the development of an internal organ can make these changes more challenging. Fortunately for these babies, special newborn care is available.

In this section we will review some of the medical conditions that preterm and term infants may face during their treatment in the NICU.

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