



Choosing Your Baby's Provider: Information for Parents

Picking a provider—whether a doctor or nurse practitioner—to care for your baby after discharge is an important decision. You may need to see this person often, and you will be dependent on him or her for advice, medical care, and help as you coordinate your baby's care. Start looking for a provider before your baby is ready to go home. This will give you time to find someone you are comfortable working with to make taking your baby home less stressful.

Here are some things to consider when picking a provider:

- What types of providers are close to home? Are there pediatricians, family practice doctors, or nurse practitioners?
- How far are you willing to travel to see a provider? Ask your baby's nurse what kind of special care your baby might need when he or she goes home.
- Consider asking friends and family for suggestions. The doctors or nurse practitioners in the NICU might also be able to help you identify a few providers to consider.

Here are some questions to ask potential providers:

- Is the provider on your insurance plan? Is the provider accepting new patients?
- Can you set up an appointment and meet the provider before bringing your infant home?
- Does the provider have experience caring for infants with your child's conditions, such as prematurity, feeding problems, or lung issues? Is the provider comfortable coordinating the specialty care your child may need after going home?

Does the provider have separate “sick” and “well” waiting areas or another way to make sure your infant stays well while at the office?

- With which hospitals is the provider working? Will they care for your baby if he or she has to be admitted to the hospital again?
- What are the provider's hours? If the provider is part of a group, do you always see your own doctor or nurse practitioner? How long is a typical appointment? Are weekend hours available?
- What if you need to talk with someone after hours? Does the provider offer a “nurse line” for questions?
- How are emergency calls handled?
- While you are breastfeeding, is there someone at the office who can help you with questions or provide support?

Discussing these topics with your provider before bringing your baby home can make you more comfortable with your provider and make coming home less stressful. Don't forget to schedule your first appointment within a few days of going home. Once you choose your provider and make your appointment, make sure to give that information to the NICU team so they can share information about your baby with your new provider.