

NICU: Reading to Your Baby

During their hospital stay, your baby learns and develops every day. When parents read to their baby in the NICU, they:

- Bond with their baby
- Reduce stress for baby
- Help baby's brain develop, especially in language skills

Benefits of Reading to Your Baby

While you read, your baby is able to hear your voice, which often relaxes and soothes them. Reading helps your baby begin to recognize sounds and words, which starts to build their language skills. It also develops baby's listening and memory skills. Reading is a great shared activity that helps parents engage and connect with their baby while in the NICU.

What You Can Do

Remember that what your child truly needs most to thrive and grow is YOU! Yes, reading is great for your baby, but what they truly love most is you, your voice and the everyday interactions you share together!

- Read to your child at the same time every day to promote trust and routine.
- While you read, use different inflections and tones of voice to match emotions in the story. This supports social and emotional development.
- Pay attention to your baby's reactions. If they become fussy or distracted, it is OK to stop reading and not finish the book. You can always take a break to let them rest or play. Then, try again later.
- As your baby gets older, let them explore books with different textures and colors. Let your baby to use their hands to touch, feel and hold.

Always check with your baby's care team about the best time to read to your baby. Please use our book carts located in the NICU Family Lounges. Borrow up to 3 books at a time and return them for other to use when you are done.

For more information on reading or support in playing and interacting with your baby while in the NICU, please contact your Child Life Specialist at 312.472.3201.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Neonatal Intensive Care Unit