

5 Things to Ask When Choosing WHERE to Have Your Baby

If you have any conditions which make your pregnancy higher risk, there's no more important decision to consider than which hospital you choose for delivery. The following are some tips for you to ask that can help ensure you have the right facility.

1. DOES THE HOSPITAL HAVE A NICU?

"NICU" means Neonatal Intensive Care Unit – it's a special ward in the hospital where babies delivered early ("preemies") or those that have complications during birth are watched, monitored and cared for by experienced nurse and physician teams.

2. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR BABY ARRIVES "EARLY"?

Any baby born before 37 weeks gestation is considered "premature." Every effort will be made to avoid delivery before that time, for the health of you and your baby, but if your baby is a preemie here's what is likely to happen. Your baby will be cared for in the NICU and be monitored for health issues common to premature babies, such as breathing problems, difficulty feeding, and regulating body temperature. In general, preemies can go home when they reach 4 lbs., can breathe on their own, are feeding well, and can stay warm without an incubator.

3. DOES THE HOSPITAL OFFER A HIGH RISK INFANT FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM?

Once your baby leaves the hospital, you'll still want to have regular checks both with your obstetrician as well as at the hospital. The hospital will often have post-partum classes for new moms to help you adapt to caring for your new baby and the myriad of feelings that brings with it, as well as health checks to ensure your baby is growing well in their early development weeks and months. This is particularly important if your baby was born with any medical conditions that require close monitoring.

4. WHAT DOES A LEVEL III NICU OFFER THAT OTHER FACILITIES DON'T?

Should your baby need it, a proper Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit can provide ventilation and support services, newborn imaging capabilities, access to a wider range of pediatric specialists,



surgeries without being transferred out of the facility, and much more. It is a center dedicated to ensuring the health and well-being of newborns who need extra care, with a team of experienced professionals who can help your baby get the care and attention they need for the best start in life.

5. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU CHOOSE A HOSPITAL THAT DOESN'T HAVE A NICU?

If you have complications during birth, and the medical care team determines your baby will benefit from a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, your baby is typically rushed via ambulance to a hospital that has the proper level NICU in your community, even if you are not yet discharged. This can be a stressful time for families, something we actively encourage you to carefully consider when choosing a hospital for birth and delivery services. It can affect everyone in your family.

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The only Level III NICU in the Central Valley