

## Glossary of NICU Terms

**Apnea:** A pause of over 20 seconds in an infant's breathing pattern.

**Bilirubin:** A byproduct of the breakdown of red blood cells.

**Blood gas:** A blood test for determining the pH and levels of oxygen, carbon dioxide and bicarbonate in the blood. The test tells if a baby needs more or less oxygen or other changes in the respirator.

**Bradycardia:** Slowing of the heart.

**Bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD):** Changes in a baby's lungs following severe respiratory distress in premature infants who have been treated with oxygen and mechanical ventilation.

**Continuing care nursery (CCN):** A nursery that eases an infant's transition to home.

**Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP):** A method in which low pressure is kept in the airways to keep the air sacs in the lungs open and make it easier for a baby to breathe. The baby does all the breathing on his or her own.

**Cyanosis:** Bluish coloration of the skin, lips or nails that happens when there is not enough oxygen in the blood.

**Echocardiogram:** A method of recording a picture of the heart using the echo of sound waves that can be used to evaluate the structure and function of the heart.

**Endotracheal tube (ETT):** A plastic tube placed through the nose or mouth into the trachea (windpipe). The tube allows oxygen to be delivered to the lungs by a respirator.

**Gavage feeding:** Feeding through a small plastic tube passed through the nose or mouth into the stomach.

**Gestational age:** Age of a baby in weeks, starting from the beginning of pregnancy.

**Glucose:** Sugar in the blood used for energy.

**Hematocrit ("crit"):** The percentage of red blood cells in the blood.

**Hyperalimentation (HAL):** Administration of nutrients into a vein. Used with infants who can not be fed breast milk or formula.

**Incubator:** A type of enclosed bed for an infant who is not mature enough to maintain his or her temperature in an open bed.

**Induced hypothermia:** A treatment that reduces a baby's core temperature. The treatment is thought to provide some protection to the injured brain of an infant who has suffered from a traumatic event before or during the birth process.

**Intralipid:** A white, high-calorie solution given through a vein to provide fat for babies who cannot be fed breast milk or formula.

**Intravenous (IV):** A thick, plastic tube placed in a baby's umbilical artery and/or vein (UA or UV line) or in a vein in the head, hand or foot. It is used to take a blood sample and/or to give fluids and nourishment.

**Isolette:** See "incubator."

**Intraventricular hemorrhage (IHV):** Abnormal bleeding in the brain's central chambers (ventricles).

**Jaundice:** A yellow color of the skin caused by too much bilirubin in the blood. Usually, this is a temporary condition.

**Meconium:** A baby's first stool, which is dark green or black.

**Nasogastric (NG) or orogastric tube:** A small plastic tube placed in the stomach through the nose or mouth. It can be used to feed a baby, give medicines or remove air from the stomach.

**Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC):** A serious illness that affects the bowel wall.

**NPO:** Latin abbreviation for "nothing by mouth." If a baby is kept NPO, nutritional needs will be met by intravenous fluids.

**Oscillator ventilator:** A highly specialized breathing machine.

**Oxygen:** A colorless, odorless gas that makes up 21 percent of the air we breathe. Sick or premature babies often need extra oxygen.

**Oxygen hood (OXY-Hood):** A clear plastic box with a tube attached that is placed over the head to deliver oxygen to a baby.

**Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA):** A condition in which the blood vessel that connects the aorta (the main artery of the body) and the pulmonary artery (the artery that brings blood to the lungs) does not close as it should after birth.

**Persistent pulmonary hypertension (PPH):** A condition in which the blood continues to flow through an infant's heart the way it did in the womb. This condition causes cyanosis and extreme instability of the body.

**Phototherapy:** Treatment for jaundice using fluorescent lights.

**Pneumonia:** An inflammation of the lungs.

**Pneumothorax:** The presence of air between the outer lining of the lung and the chest wall, which causes the lung to collapse.

**Premature infant:** An infant born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

**Pulse oximeter (pulse ox):** A machine that measures the amount of oxygen bound to the hemoglobin molecules in the blood through a small probe wrapped around an infant's hand or foot.

**Radiant warmer:** An open bed with an overhead warmer that helps keep a baby warm.

**Respirator (ventilator):** A machine to help with breathing.

**Respiratory distress syndrome (RDS):** A condition in a newborn that causes breathing difficulties. It is a result of an insufficient supply of a chemical called surfactant that helps expand the small air sacs in the lungs.

**Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP):** An eye disease found primarily in premature infants.

**Sepsis:** An infection.

**Tachypnea:** Fast breathing.

**Transcutaneous monitor (TCM):** A monitoring device placed on the skin to record blood oxygen levels.

**Ultrasound:** A method of taking pictures of body organs such as the brain, kidney or liver.

**Vital sign:** An indication that a person is alive. Vital signs include temperature, heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure.