

----- **A** -----

ABM - abbreviation for Artificial Baby Milk (formula)

ABO incompatibility - a blood incompatibility that may occur when the mother's blood type is O and the baby's blood type is either A or B.

a.c. - the abbreviation for the Latin words meaning "before meals."

Acidosis (acidemia) - an excess of acid in the blood and body tissues.

AGA (appropriate for gestational age) - a baby who weighs between the 10th and 90th percentile by weight for his gestational age on standard growth curves.

Alpha Feto Protein (AFP) - a protein normally produced by a fetus, which can be measured prenatally in the mother's blood to identify possible birth defects.

Alternative birth center (ABC) - a hospital room with a homelike atmosphere where a woman can have a natural childbirth, recovery and postpartum stay.

Alveoli - 1. Tiny sacs in the lungs where the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide take place, OR 2. Tiny sacs in the milk glands of the breast where breast milk is made.

Amblyopia - a loss of vision, centered in the brain, that develops over a period of years when the brain fails to receive proper signals from a weak eye.

Amniocentesis - a procedure to obtain a sample of amniotic fluid, by passing a needle through a pregnant woman's abdomen and into her uterus. The fluid can be analyzed to detect some birth defects (such as Down syndrome), signs of infection, or to assess a fetus's lung maturity.

Amnioinfusion - a procedure in which liquid is infused into the womb through a catheter, with the goal of reestablishing a sufficient amount of amniotic fluid around the fetus.

Amniotic fluid - the fluid surrounding the fetus in the uterus, which serves to protect the fetus during pregnancy.

Amnionitis - an infection of the amniotic fluid.

Ampicillin - an antibiotic.

Anemia - an abnormally low number of red blood cells, which carry oxygen to the tissues. In preemies, anemia can cause breathing problems, low energy, and poor growth.

Anomaly - A malformation of a part of the body.

Anoxia - a lack of sufficient oxygen in the blood and body tissues.

Antepartum - before birth.

Antibiotics - medicines used to treat infection.

Antibodies - proteins produced by the body that fight infections caused by bacteria and viruses that have entered the body. Many helpful antibodies are found in a mother's breastmilk, and can be passed into a baby through breastmilk feedings.

Aorta - the main artery leading from the heart that supplies the body with oxygenated blood.

Apgar Score - a score first introduced by Dr. Virginia Apgar to assess the newborn's need for resuscitation. Apgar scores range from 0 to 10. Points are assigned beginning at one minute after birth, and at five-minute intervals thereafter, for heart rate, respiration, reflexes, muscle tone, and color, until an infant is stable.

Apnea - a pause in breathing that lasts for more than 20 seconds, or is accompanied by a slow heart rate (Bradycardia)

or a change in skin color. Apnea is common among preemies, who still have immature control of their breathing.

Areola - the dark area on the breast surrounding the nipple.

Arterial Blood Gases (ABG) - a sample of blood obtained from an artery in order to analyze its oxygen, carbon dioxide, and acid content.

Arterial catheter (indwelling arterial catheter) - a thin plastic tube placed in an artery to give nutrients, and medications, measure blood pressure, and to withdraw blood for testing.

Arterial catheters are most commonly placed in the umbilical artery (an umbilical artery catheter or UAC), but they may also be inserted into a peripheral artery at the wrist or ankle (peripheral arterial line or PAL).

Artery - any blood vessel that leads away from the heart. Arteries carry oxygenated blood to the body tissues (except for the pulmonary artery that carries non-oxygenated blood from the heart to the lungs). The largest artery in the body is the aorta.

Asphyxia - the interruption of blood gas exchange or blood flow, causing low oxygen and high carbon dioxide and acidosis to accumulate in the body.

Aspiration - 1. Breathing a foreign substance such as meconium, formula, or stomach contents into the lungs; may cause aspiration pneumonia.
2. Withdrawal of material from the body by suctioning.

Asymmetric (head-sparing) growth restriction - when an SGA, or small-for-gestational age, baby is born with a normal head circumference. Asymmetric growth restriction is believed to occur when nutrients are in short supply in the womb and nature preferentially gives scarce nourishment to the brain - a vital organ - compared to the rest of the body.

Ataxic CP - a type of cerebral palsy that is characterized by clumsy, uncoordinated movements and poor balance.

Atelectasis - a collapsed condition in a part of the lungs.

Athetoid CP - a type of cerebral palsy in which muscle tone is changeable, varying between too high and too low, and there are often involuntary movements of the face and upper body.

Attending physician - a fully trained physician in charge of some or all of the patients in the NICU.

Audiologist - a trained professional who tests for hearing loss, assists in determining the cause of such hearing loss, and plans a program to address hearing impairment in infants.

Audiometric testing - tests for hearing loss. (See Crib-O-Gram or brainstem auditory evoked response test).

----- B -----

Bacteria - one-celled organisms that can cause infection.

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) - an infection caused by the overgrowth of common bacteria normally living in the vagina, it is believed to be a risk factor for preterm delivery.

BAER (Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response) - painless test done to check an infant's hearing. Usually done by an audiologist just before or after discharge from the NICU.

Bagging - pumping air and/or oxygen into the baby's lungs by compressing a bag attached to a mask that covers the baby's nose and mouth or attached to the baby's endotracheal (ET) tube.

Bayley Scales - tests given to infants and toddlers to assess their level of development.

Beta-adrenergic drugs - see betamimetics.

Betamethasone - a steroid medication given to a mother when a premature delivery is anticipated to help the baby's lungs mature.

Betamimetics - (also called beta-adrenergic drugs or betasympathomimetic drugs) a category of drugs used to stop labor.

Betasympathomimetics - see betamimetics

Bicarbonate (bicarb), (sodium bicarbonate), (NaHCO_3) - a substance that may be given the baby orally or intravenously

to help neutralize excess acid in the blood.

b.i.d. - the abbreviation for the Latin words meaning "twice a day".

Bili Lights - (phototherapy) special lights used to treat neonatal jaundice.

Bilirubin - a substance produced when red blood cells break down. When excessive amounts are present in the bloodstream, jaundice, a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes, can occur. When very high levels are present, brain damage can result. (See kernicterus)

Bladder tap - a way to withdraw urine from the bladder under sterile conditions by inserting a needle through the abdominal wall directly into the bladder.

Blood Gases - a test to determine the oxygen, carbon dioxide, and acid content of a sample of blood; used to adjust respiratory care.

Blood Glucose - a test used to determine the baby's blood sugar.

Blood group or type - a classification of blood according to the presence or absence of certain proteins. Each person belongs either to type O, A, B, or AB. Differences in blood type between mother and baby (ABO incompatibilities) can lead to anemia and jaundice in the baby. Blood is also categorized as Rh positive or Rh negative by the presence or absence of the Rh factor. When an Rh-negative mother carries an Rh-positive child, antibodies in her blood may cross the placenta and attack her baby's red blood cells. The resulting condition, called erythroblastosis fetalis, is characterized by severe anemia and jaundice in the newborn.

Blood pressure - the pressure the blood exerts against the walls of the blood vessels. It is this pressure that causes the blood to flow through the arteries and veins. The blood pressure measurement is given in the form of two numbers. The top number, the systolic pressure, is the measurement of the pressure exerted when the heart contracts and sends blood to the body. The lower number, the diastolic pressure, is the measurement of the pressure exerted during the relaxation between heartbeats.

Bonding - the process by which parents and baby become emotionally attached.

BPD (bronchopulmonary dysplasia)- see Chronic Lung Disease (CLD)

Bradycardia ("brady") - a heart rate that is slower than normal.

Brain bleed - bleeding or hemorrhaging into some part of the brain.

Brain death - an absence of electrical impulses from the brain.

Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response Test (BAER) - a method of detecting hearing loss in infants in which the baby's brain wave responses to various sounds are measured.

Braxton-Hicks contractions - normal "practice" contractions of the uterus that occur at irregular intervals during pregnancy and do not lead to effacement or dilation of the cervix.

Brazelton Neonatal Assessment Scale (BNAS) - tests of a newborn's reflexes, behavior, and responses to his environment.

Breastfeeding jaundice - a type of jaundice caused by low intake of breastmilk in the first week after birth.

Breastmilk jaundice - a common type of jaundice thought to be caused by a substance in the mother's milk.

Breech delivery - when a baby is born buttocks or feet first.

Brethine - see [terbutaline](#)

Bronchial tubes - the tubes that lead from the trachea (windpipe) to the lungs.

Bronchioles - small tubes that branch off from the bronchial tubes.

Bronchiolitis - an inflammation or infection of the bronchioles.

Bronchitis - an inflammation or infection of the bronchial tubes.

Bronchoscopy - a procedure that involves looking inside a baby's trachea and bronchi (the large airways of the lungs) with a fiberoptic scope, to see whether there is a problem that is making breathing more difficult.

Bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) - see Chronic Lung Disease (CLD).

BUN (blood urea and nitrogen) - a blood test for liver and kidney function.

----- **C** -----

Caffeine - a stimulant drug used in the treatment of apnea.

Calcium - a chemical necessary for the normal functioning of the nerves, the heart, and other muscles, and for the growth of bones and teeth.

Candida albicans (monilia) - the fungus that causes thrush and other "yeast" infections.

Capillaries - tiny blood vessels that come into close contact with the body cells to supply the cells with oxygen and nutrients, and to remove waste products.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) - a gaseous waste product of bodily processes that is carried by the blood to the lungs where it is exhaled.

Cardiology - the branch of medicine dealing with the heart and circulation.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) - a method of reviving a person whose heartbeat and breathing has stopped or slowed abnormally.

Cath toes - temporary discoloration of a baby's toes due to decreased blood flow to the toes, sometimes due to an umbilical artery catheter.

Catheter - a thin tube used to administer fluids to the body or to drain fluids from the body.

CBC - see complete blood count.

Celestone - see betamethasone.

Central line - an intravenous line that is threaded through the vein until it reaches a position close to the heart. Central lines are used to administer 1. Solutions containing high concentrations of sugar or protein or 2. Medications that must be given for a prolonged period.

Central nervous system (CNS) - the brain and spinal cord.

Cerclage - a surgical procedure in which the cervix is sewn shut, to prevent it's opening at an early stage of pregnancy and premature delivery.

Cerebral palsy (CP) - permanent brain damage that can result in difficulty with coordinated movements. Intelligence may be normal in those with CP.

Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) - fluid produced in the ventricles of the brain that circulates around the brain and spinal column.

Cervix - the lower section of the uterus, which dilates (opens) and effaces (thins and shortens) during labor and delivery to allow for the passage of the infant.

Charge nurse - the nurse in the unit who is in charge of nursing care for that shift.

Chest tube - a tube surgically inserted through the chest wall and into the chest cavity (between the collapsed lung and the chest wall) to remove air or fluid that has caused a lung to collapse. It allows the lung to re-expand.

Chorioamnionitis - an infection of the amniotic fluid and sac.

Chronic lung disease (CLD) - chronic injury or scarring in a preemie or sick infant's lungs thought to be caused by the action of oxygen and mechanical ventilation on immature or very ill lungs over time. Formerly called "bronchopulmonary dysplasia".

CLD - abbreviation for "chronic lung disease."

Clinical nurse specialist - a registered nurse who has received special training, through a master's degree program. The clinical nurse specialist may carry out special medical procedures, or may be involved with education of parents and staff.

CMV - see Cytomegalovirus.

CNS - see central nervous system.

Cochlear implant - a device that is surgically implanted in the inner ear, it picks up sounds from the environment and directly stimulates the auditory nerve. A cochlear implant is one approach to dealing with a profound hearing impairment.

Colostomy - a surgically created opening to allow the colon, the lower section of the large intestine, to empty directly through the abdominal wall.

Colostrum - breastmilk produced in late pregnancy or in the first 3-5 days after delivery. This milk is usually yellowish in color and is especially rich in nutrients and antibodies.

Complete blood count (CBC) - a blood test to determine the number and types of cells found in blood. This test checks for cells that may be associated with infection as well as assessing for anemia.

Conductive hearing loss - a temporary or permanent type of hearing loss caused by middle ear problems.

Cone biopsy - a surgical procedure in which tissue from the cervix is removed to check it for malignancy. The procedure is associated with an increased risk for later preterm delivery.

Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia (CDH) - a type of birth defect in which a hole in the diaphragm (membrane that separates the chest from the abdomen) allows abdominal organs to come into the chest, causing poor development of the lung on one or both sides.

Congestive heart failure (CHF) - failure of the heart to perform efficiently because of a circulatory imbalance. This condition can occur in patent ductus arteriosus (PDA).

Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) - pressurized air, sometimes with additional oxygen, that is delivered to the baby's lungs to keep them from collapsing as the baby inhales and exhales. Usually delivered by nasal prongs or facemask.

Corrected age - 1. The age of a premature baby determined by adding his postnatal days to his gestational age at birth. A baby who is fourteen days old and was born at twenty-six weeks would have a corrected age of twenty-eight weeks.
2. The age a premature baby would be if he had been born on his due date. For example, a baby born 3 months early is, at the actual age of 7 months, only 4 months old according to his corrected age.

CP - see cerebral palsy.

CPAP - see continuous positive airway pressure.

CPR - see cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

CPT (Chest Physical Therapy) - tapping or vibrating the chest of a baby with respiratory problems to loosen mucus. This is NOT painful.

CSF - see cerebrospinal fluid.

Culture - samples of blood or other body fluid taken from the baby to determine if there is an infection.

Cultures and sensitivities - samples of fluid or other material from the body are placed in special cultures that encourage the growth of any infectious organisms present. Organisms that grow are then tested for their sensitivity to various antibiotics.

Cyanosis (Duskiness) - bluish color of the skin caused by poor circulation or low oxygen concentration in the bloodstream.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) - a type of virus that may infect a baby either before or after birth. In some cases CMV causes severe illness and birth defects.

----- D -----

dc - medical abbreviation for "discontinue," i.e. "stop".

Decadron - the trade name for dexamethasone, a steroid drug.

Denver Developmental Screening Test (DDST) - a screening test to help identify infants and children with developmental delays.

DES - see diethylstilbestrol.

Developmental care - an approach to caring for premature babies that places an emphasis on their individual needs and on keeping them as free from stress as possible.

Developmental delay - a delay in reaching certain developmental milestones, relative to most other children of the same age.

In preemies, developmental delays may be temporary or permanent.

Dexamethasone - a steroid medication that may be used to reduce swelling in the brain following a brain injury or may be given to a baby who has BPD to enable the physicians to wean the respirator.

Dextrostix - a screening blood test used to measure levels of sugar in the bloodstream at the bedside.

DIC - see *disseminated intravascular coagulation*.

Diethylstilbestrol (DES) - a synthetic estrogen drug prescribed for pregnant women from the 1930s to the early 1970s to prevent miscarriage and premature labor. The drug was found to cause physical abnormalities in the genitalia of the daughters of women who took it. So-called DES daughters are also at increased risk of infertility, ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage, and preterm labor.

Disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) - a condition in which the platelets and clotting factors of the blood are consumed because of infection, hypoxia, acidosis, or other diseases or injuries. Without sufficient platelets and clotting factors, there is a tendency to bleed excessively. Transfusion of platelets or exchange transfusions may be given to correct this condition.

Diuretic - a medication that increases the excretion of body water through the urine.

Dizygotic twins - fraternal twins, who don't share all of the same genes.

Doppler - 1. A monitoring device attached to a special blood pressure cuff to give intermittent blood pressure measurements; 2. Part of an ultrasound study to measure blood flow.

Donor Specific Blood - blood that has been donated specifically for one baby from a family member or friend

Down syndrome - a chromosomal abnormality, sometimes referred to as mongolism, characterized by physical malformations and varying degrees of mental retardation. Often caused by an extra number 21 chromosome.

DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) - used to refer to the immunizations against these diseases.

Dubowitz assessment - an assessment of a newborn's appearance, behavior, and activity to determine the baby's gestational age at birth.

Ductus arteriosus - a blood vessel in the fetus that joins the aorta with the pulmonary artery in order to divert most blood away from the fetal lungs. This blood vessel must close after birth so that blood can flow properly to the lungs to receive oxygen.

dx - the medical abbreviation for "diagnosis".

Dyslexia - a learning disability, dyslexia means difficulty with reading. It can refer to problems with any of the steps involved in reading, such as recognizing letters as symbols, perceiving the different sounds that make up words, or remembering words that one has read.

Dysmature - refers to a baby whose weight gain stops in the weeks before birth as a result of poor placental functioning.

Dyspnea - shortness of breath.

----- **E** -----

EBM - abbreviation for expressed breastmilk. Milk that is expressed by hand or with a breast pump to be fed to a mother's own baby.

Echocardiogram (heart echo) - a picture of the heart produced by the echo of ultrasound waves directed through the

chest. This is a painless, non-invasive procedure.

Eclampsia - seizures, occurring in a pregnant woman with preeclampsia.

Edema - fluid retention in the body tissues that causes puffiness or swelling.

EEG - (electroencephalogram) a tracing of the electrical impulses of the brain.

EKG (electrocardiogram) a tracing of the heart's electrical activity.

Electrodes - small patches taped to the baby's chest, arms or legs connected to a monitor to measure the heart and breathing rates.

Electroencephalogram (EEG) - a tracing of the electrical impulses of the brain.

Electrolytes - chemicals that, when dissolved in water, can conduct an electrical current. The main electrolytes in the human body are sodium (Na) and Potassium (K). They play important roles in the proper functioning of the cells.

Embryo - the term used to describe the early stages of fetal growth, approximately the fourth to ninth week of pregnancy.

Endotracheal Tube (ET Tube) - a plastic tube inserted into the baby's trachea (windpipe) to assist the baby's breathing. You will not hear the baby cry while this tube is in place.

Enterostomy - or "ostomy" for short. The medical term for the open, unconnected ends of a baby's intestines, which are brought out through a small incision in the skin of his belly during bowel surgery.

Epilepsy - a disorder of the nervous system that results in periodic convulsions or seizures

Episiotomy - an incision made to widen the vaginal opening during childbirth.

ER - emergency room

Erythroblastosis fetalis - a condition in which the fetus (unborn infant) develops severe swelling of the tissues and fluid around the lungs, heart and intestines. The most common cause is severe anemia of the fetus, but there are many possible causes.

Erythrocyte - a red blood cell

Erythropoietin - this is a natural hormone that stimulates the body to produce red blood cells. It can be made in the laboratory, and given to preemies to help prevent or treat anemia.

Esophagus - the tube extending from the mouth to the stomach that carries food to the stomach.

Estriol levels - a series of tests to check the mother's blood or urine for the hormone estriol. The tests are done to assess fetal well-being over a period of time.

ET tube - see endotracheal tube.

Exchange transfusion - a type of blood transfusion in which the infant's blood is removed in small amounts and simultaneously replaced with the same amounts of donor blood, often to dilute harmful concentrations of bilirubin.

Extubation - the removal of the endotracheal tube.

----- F -----

Fellow - a neonatology fellow is a physician who has finished his or her residency in pediatrics and is training to become a specialist in neonatology. There are fellows in all specialties.

Fetal circulation - the special pattern of blood flow in an unborn baby in which the blood flows to and from the placenta to receive oxygen and nutrients, and to discharge wastes.

Fetal fibronectin - a protein helping to keep the placenta and membranes attached to the uterine lining. Low free levels of fibronectin detected on a swab of the vagina or cervix can help reassure that a preterm delivery is not imminent.

Fetus - the developing baby from approximately the ninth week of pregnancy until birth.

Fibroids - benign (noncancerous) growths in the uterine wall.

Fine motor skills - skills involving the coordination of the small muscles such as those in the hand.

Fontanel - the "soft spot" on the top of the baby's head between the un-joined sections of the skull.

Fraternal twins - twins formed when two eggs are simultaneously released and fertilized.

Full-term (FT) - an infant born between the thirty-eighth and forty-second weeks of gestation.

----- **G** -----

GA - see gestational age.

Gastrostomy - a surgically created opening in the abdominal wall to provide nutrition directly to the stomach when the esophagus is blocked or injured, or to provide drainage after abdominal surgery.

Gastroesophageal reflux - often referred to as "GE reflux" or just "reflux", this is a condition in which food in the stomach comes back up into the esophagus, and sometimes all the way out of the mouth. It is similar to heartburn in adults.

Gavage Feeding - a method of feeding breast milk or formula through a small tube passed through the baby's mouth or nose into the stomach.

Genetic abnormality - a disorder arising from abnormalities in the chromosomes of each cell that may or may not be hereditary (passed on in a family). Chromosomes are made up of "genes" which contain basic information for the growth and development of the fetus or person.

Genetic counseling - advice and information provided by trained professional counselors on the detection and risk of occurrence of genetic disorders.

Gentamicin - a type of antibiotic.

Gestation - the length of time between the first day of the mother's last menstrual period before conception and the delivery of the baby.

Gestational Age - the length of time from conception to birth. A full-term infant has a gestational age of 38-42 weeks.

Glucose - the type of sugar that circulates in the blood and is used by the body for energy.

Gram - a unit of measuring weight. 30 grams = 1 ounce. Each baby is weighed daily and the weight is measured in grams.

Gram stain - a technique in which certain types of dyes are used to stain tissue and bacteria so that they become easily visible under the microscope.

Grunting - a noise made by the baby indicating respiratory distress.

Guaic - pronounced "GWY-ak," this is a test performed on a sample of a baby's stool, to see whether there is any blood in it that isn't visible to the naked eye.

----- **H** -----

HA (hyperalimentation) - see total parenteral nutrition.

Head Ultrasound - a painless procedure used for looking at structures in the brain using sound waves; used in detecting bleeding into the brain or other suspected abnormalities.

Heelstick - a method of obtaining blood samples by pricking the baby's heel.

HELLP syndrome - short for Hemolysis, Elevated Liver enzymes, and Low Platelets, HELLP syndrome is a severe form of preeclampsia. It involves dangerous abnormalities of blood clotting with liver damage, and carries a risk of stroke or even death.

Hematocrit (Crit) - a test done to measure the concentration of red blood cells in the blood to check for anemia.

Hematology - the medical specialty dealing with blood disorders.

Hemoglobin (hgb., hb) - a substance in red blood cells that contains iron and carries oxygen.

Hemolysis - the rupture or breakdown of red blood cells.

Hemolytic - pertaining to hemolysis.

Heparin Lock - a small, hollow, needle put into the hand, foot or scalp through which medicine is given intermittently.

Hernia - a weakness in the abdominal wall that causes a portion of the intestines to protrude into the umbilical or inguinal area. This may also occur with a problem of the diaphragm that causes the bowel to enter the chest cavity, resulting in underdevelopment of the lung.

Herpes - a virus that produces sores on the mouth or genitals. In infants, it can cause a severe body-wide-infection often leading to death or neurological damage.

High-risk (at-risk) - refers to persons or situations needing special intervention to prevent illness, damage, or death, or to keep illness or damage from worsening. (i.e. high-risk newborns, high-risk pregnancies).

HMD - see *hyaline membrane disease*.

House officer (HO) - intern, nurse specialist, nurse practitioner, or resident. A house officer may be the person on first call; in other words, he or she is the first person to be consulted on medical aspects of the baby's care. Some hospitals have attending physicians as the "in-house" person on call.

House staff - another term used to refer to the house officers. Usually a doctor in residency training.

Hyaline membrane disease (HMD) - also known as respiratory distress syndrome (RDS). Respiratory distress that affects premature babies. It is caused by a lack of surfactant, the substance that keeps the lung air sacs (alveoli) from collapsing.

Hydramnios - see polyhydramnios and oligohydramnios.

Hydrocephalus - an abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the ventricles (fluid filled spaces) of the brain. In preemies, hydrocephalus most often occurs after a severe intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH).

Hyperactivity - see minimal brain dysfunction.

Hyperalimentation - a yellow IV solution which contains protein, sugar, and necessary vitamins and minerals given to a baby who will not be able to take full milk feedings for several days or weeks. (See total parenteral nutrition)

Hyperbilirubinemia - excess bilirubin in the blood. A condition common in newborns.

Hypercalcemia - an excessive amount of calcium in the blood.

Hypercapnia (hypercarbia) - an excess of carbon dioxide in the bloodstream.

Hyperglycemia - abnormally high sugar levels in the blood.

Hyperkalemia - excessive amounts of potassium in the blood.

Hypnatremia - excessive amounts of sodium in the blood.

Hypertension - high blood pressure.

Hyperthermia - abnormally high body temperature.

Hyperventilation - abnormally rapid breathing.

Hypocalcemia - abnormally low levels of calcium in the blood.

Hypoglycemia - a condition when not enough glucose (sugar) is in the baby's blood to use as a fuel for energy.

Hypokalemia - too little potassium in the blood.

Hyponatremia - too little sodium in the blood.

Hypotension - abnormally low blood pressure.

Hypothermia - abnormally low body temperature, a frequent problem with low-birth weight premature babies.

Hypovolemia - an abnormally low volume of blood in the body.

Hypoxia - a lack of sufficient oxygen.

Hysterosalpingogram - a test in which dyes, visible on an x-ray, are injected into the womb and Fallopian tubes. X-rays are then taken to detect any structural abnormalities of the reproductive organs.

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I and O - abbreviation for "input and output." It refers to the amount of fluids given by oral feedings or by IV, and the amount of fluid excreted in the urine or stools, as well as blood removed for testing, over a given period of time.

Iatrogenic - an injury or disease caused by medical treatment.

ICH - see intracranial hemorrhage.

ICN - abbreviation for "intensive care nursery".

Identical twins - twins that result from the accidental division of a single fertilized egg.

IDM - abbreviation for "infant of a diabetic mother."

IL - see Intralipid.

Ileostomy - a surgically created opening to allow the ileus, the part of the intestine above the colon, to empty directly through the abdominal wall.

IM - see intramuscular injection.

Inborn - a child born and treated in the same hospital, a baby who was not transported to receive intensive care.

Incompetent cervix - a cervix that opens in mid to late pregnancy, often causing a miscarriage or premature birth.

Indomethacin - an aspirin-like drug sometimes used to close the patent ductus arteriosus.

Infiltrate - 1. The slipping of an intravenous needle out of the vein, allowing IV fluid to accumulate in surrounding tissues.

2. Fluid or other foreign substances in the alveoli of the lungs, seen as fuzzy areas on a chest x-ray.

Informed consent - permission that a person or the guardian of a patient gives for a specific medical procedure after the risks, benefits, and alternatives have been fully explained by the physician.

Infusion pump - a pump attached to an intravenous line to deliver IV fluids to the baby in tiny, precisely measured amounts.

Interleukin 6 - a protein whose high levels in amniotic fluid or in an expectant mother's blood can signal a uterine infection, possibly leading to preterm delivery.

Intern - a doctor just out of medical school who is in the process of completing his or her first year of specialty training.

Intracranial hemorrhage (ICH) - bleeding in or around the brain.

Intralipid - a white IV solution containing a high concentration of fat (lipid).

Intramuscular injection (IM) - an injection into the muscle; in a premature baby, injections are usually given into the thigh muscle.

Intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR) - refers to a baby who is smaller by weight than normal for her gestation age at birth. This can be caused by various fetal or maternal complications.

Intravenous (IV) - a tube or a needle placed into a vein to allow the infusion of fluids into the blood stream.

Intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH) - bleeding within the ventricles (fluid filled spaces) of the brain.

Intubation - the insertion of a tube into the trachea (windpipe) to allow air to reach the lungs to assist with breathing.

In utero - within the womb.

Isolette (Incubator) - a transparent plastic box, equipped with a heating system, to keep premature babies warm. Isolettes used to be known as incubators.

IUGR - see [intrauterine growth retardation](#).

IV (Intravenous) Fluids - a method of giving babies special liquids and medicines by putting a small hollow needle into a vein in the hand or foot. Babies' scalp veins are often used and they may require the shaving of a small patch of your baby's hair.

IVC - indwelling venous catheter.

IVH (intraventricular hemorrhage) - bleeding occurring in an inner part of the brain, near the ventricles, where premature babies have blood vessels that are particularly fragile and prone to rupture.

----- J -----

Jaundice - a yellowish discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes caused by a buildup of bilirubin in the body.

Jugular veins - large veins on either side of the neck that return blood to the heart from the head and neck.

----- K -----

K - chemical symbol for potassium. See [electrolytes](#).

Kangaroo care - a way to hold your baby skin-to-skin, against your bare-chest, inside your shirt or covered by a blanket, like a baby kangaroo in his mother's pouch.

Kernicterus - damage to nervous system caused by very high levels of bilirubin in the blood.

Kilogram (kg) - unit of weight of the metric system that equals 1000 grams or 2.2 pounds.

----- L -----

Lab Tech - a person from the laboratory who draws blood samples for the tests ordered by doctors.

Labor - process by which the cervix shortens (effaces) and opens (dilates) to allow the baby to pass from the uterus through the vagina into the outside world.

Lactation - production of milk by the breasts.

Lactation Consultant - a person who is trained to assist mothers with breast pumping or breastfeeding.

Lactose - sugar found in human milk.

Lanugo - soft and fuzzy hair, generally heavier on a baby's back, upper arms, and shoulders, which some premature babies are born with. It will be shed later.

Large for gestational age (LGA) - newborn infant who is above the 90th percentile in weight at birth for his gestational age.

Large motor skills - skills such as crawling and walking that involve the coordination of large muscle groups.

Laryngoscope - tool with a long, lighted, hollow metal tube and handle. Used in intubation to see the vocal cords and guide the tube between them.

Lasix - type of diuretic.

LBW - see [low-birthweight infant](#).

Lead wires - wires that lead from the electrodes to a monitor.

Lecithin - one of the components of surfactant (a chemical in the lungs).

Let-down reflex - release of milk into the milk ducts and down to the nipple, sometimes accompanied by a tingling sensation.

Leukocyte (white blood cell) - a type of blood cell that protects the body against harmful substances such as bacteria and viruses.

LGA - see [large for gestational age](#).

Low birthweight infant (LBW) - baby who weighs less than 5 ½ pounds (2500 gm) at birth; can be premature or full-term.

Lower respiratory tract infection (LRI) - an infection affecting the larynx (voice box), trachea (wind-pipe), bronchial tubes, the bronchioles, or the lungs.

LP - see [lumbar puncture](#).

LPN - licensed practical nurse.

LRI - see [lower respiratory tract infection](#).

L/S ratio - the ratio between lecithin and sphingomyelin (components of surfactant) in the amniotic fluid. The ratio indicates the maturity of the unborn baby's lungs.

Lumbar puncture (LP) - the procedure of withdrawing a sample of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) between the vertebrae of the lower back. The sample will be sent to the laboratory for analysis.

LVN - licensed vocational nurse.

----- M -----

Magnesium sulfate - a drug used in the treatment of toxemia and in stopping pre-term labor.

Mastitis - an inflammation of the mammary gland or breast.

MBD - see [minimal brain dysfunction](#).

Meconium - a dark green material that is the first stool that baby passes after birth.

Meconium Aspiration - breathing in of amniotic fluid containing stool passed before or during delivery.

Meconium staining - refers to staining of the amniotic fluid, placenta, infant's umbilical cord, skin or nails with meconium. In some instances, meconium stained fluid indicates the fetus was in distress before birth.

Meningitis - inflammation or infection of the meninges, the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

Meningocele - a birth defect in which there is a protrusion of the meninges (the tissue lining the brain and spinal cord) through an opening in the skull or spinal column.

Mental retardation (MR) - limited intellectual development.

Metabolism - all the life-sustaining processes carried out by the cells in the body.

Minimal brain dysfunction (MBD) - syndrome in which children experience behavioral problems and/or learning disabilities due to abnormalities in the central nervous system.

Monilia - see [Candida albicans](#).

Monitor - a machine with alarms that counts the baby's heart and breathing rate.

Monozygotic twins - identical twins that have the same genes.

Moro reflex - one of the many automatic reflexes that babies have. When startled by a sudden noise or fear of falling,

the Moro reflex leads them to throw out their arms, and arch their back.

Mucus - a sticky secretion produced by mucous membranes such as the nose and throat.

Murmur (Heart Murmur) - an extra heart sound that is heard when listening to the baby's heart with a stethoscope; this may be normal or abnormal.

Myopia - nearsightedness.

----- N -----

Na - chemical symbol for sodium.

Narcotic - a type of drug that relieves pain and produces sleep.

Nasal cannula - a set of plastic prongs and tubing that can deliver extra oxygen into a baby's nose.

Nasal CPAP - continuous positive airway pressure administered to an infant through nasal prongs.

Naso-gastric tube (NG tube) - a small plastic tube inserted through the nose or mouth and into the stomach. This tube is used for gavage feedings when an infant is unable to bottle or direct breastfeed.

NATUS - type of screening test for newborn hearing.

NBIC - an abbreviation for newborn intensive care.

NBICU - an abbreviation for newborn intensive care unit.

Nebulizer - a device that humidifies (adds water vapor to) oxygen and/or air delivered to the baby.

Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) - an intestinal disease, most common in young preemies, in which portions of the bowel are damaged or destroyed because of poor blood flow, inflammation, or infection.

Neonatal nurse practitioner (NNP) - a registered nurse who has received additional training, usually through a master's degree program, and who is qualified by this training to provide certain aspects of the baby's medical care under the supervision of a physician.

Neonatal period - the first 30 days of life.

Neonatal Pharmacist - a person who is specially trained and educated in dispensing medication for babies.

Neonate - a baby during the first month of life.

Neonatologist - a pediatrician who specializes in the care of premature or sick newborn infants. A neonatologist has special training and certification in neonatal intensive care.

Neurologist - a physician who specializes in the conditions of the brain and nervous system.

Newborn intensive care unit (NICU NBISU, NBIC, ICN) - section of a hospital with trained staff and special equipment to care for critically ill newborns. See NICU

NG Tube - see [Nasogastric tube](#)

NICU - short for **Neonatal IntensiveCare Unit**.

An NICU is a hospital ward where preemies that require complex medical care are taken care of, along with other critically ill or medical unstable newborns.

Nippling - sucking on a bottle filled with formula or breast-milk.

NNP - See [Neonatal Nurse Practitioner](#)

Non-stress test - a test in which the unborn baby's heartbeat is monitored to detect abnormal patterns indicating fetal distress.

NPO - nothing by mouth- if an infant is "NPO" then he/she is not receiving any medications or nutrients by mouth.

Nurse - a person specially trained to care for the sick. NICU nurses are specially trained to care for premature and sick

infants and their families. They work under the direction of physicians. Most NICU nurses are Registered Nurses (RN).

----- O -----

OB - the abbreviation for "obstetrician".

Obstructive apnea - a pause in breathing that occurs because a baby's airway is obstructed and little air can get through. It can happen even when a baby is moving his chest to breathe.

Occupational/Physical Therapist - a person who evaluates your baby's neurologic (brain) development and plans exercises to help development, improve muscle control and solve feeding problems.

OG (oro-gastric) tube - a soft tube that goes through a baby's mouth down into his stomach. It can be used for feeding or to empty the stomach of gas.

Oligohydramnois - a condition of too little amniotic fluid.

Omphalocele - a congenital defect that allows the intestines to protrude through an opening in the abdominal wall.

"On-call" - physician or nurse specialist who can be summoned at a particular time to make and carry out medical decisions in the nursery.

Ophthalmologist - a physician specializing in diseases of the eye.

Optician - a person who makes corrective lenses.
An optician is not a medical doctor.

OR - abbreviation for operating room.

Orthopedist - a physician specializing in diseases of the bone.

Oscillating ventilator - also called a high-frequency ventilator, it works differently than a conventional ventilator. An oscillating ventilator keeps a baby's lungs continuously inflated by providing tiny quantities of air at extremely rapid rates.

Osteopenia - a condition like rickets, in which the bones lose minerals (demineralize), become weak, and break easily. This condition is sometimes seen in prematures who receive hyperalimentation for long periods.

OT - abbreviation for occupational therapist.

Otitis media - a bacterial or viral infection of the middle ear.

Otolaryngologist - a physician specializing in disease of the ears, nose, and throat.

Otologist - a physician who specializes in disorders of the ear.

Outborn - a baby who is transported after birth to a tertiary care center for treatment.

Oximeter - a monitor placed on the baby's hand or foot used to measure the baby's oxygen level.

Oxygen (O₂) - the gas that makes up 21% of the atmosphere.
It is essential in sustaining life.
The amount of oxygen delivered to an infant can be controlled from 21% to 100%.

Oxygen Hood (Oxyhood) - a small plastic hood placed over the baby's head to give him a measured amount of oxygen and warm mist.

Oxytocin - (Pitocin) a hormone that stimulates uterine contractions and the "let-down response" in lactating mothers.

----- P -----

Parenteral nutrition - nutrition that is given intravenously, rather than through the stomach and the intestines.

Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA) - a blood vessel present in the fetus that allows blood coming from the placenta that is rich in oxygen to bypass the left side of the heart and lungs and flow through this blood vessel to the rest of the body. It usually closes in the first two weeks of life in term infants but may remain open in the preterm infant, requiring treatment to close it.

Pavulon (pancuronium) - a drug that produces temporary paralysis. It may be used to keep a baby from fighting the respirator.

p.c. - the abbreviation for the Latin words meaning "after a meal."

PCO₂ (PaCO₂) - the partial pressure of arterial carbon dioxide; a measure of the carbon dioxide content of the blood.

PDA - see patent ductus arteriosus.

PDBM/PDHM - abbreviations for pasteurized donor breastmilk/pasteurized donor human milk. Milk from donor mothers that is heat treated and therefore sterile. It is used when a mother is unable to produce enough breastmilk for her infant.

Pediatrician - a doctor who specializes in the care of infants and children.

Perinatal - the period from the twentieth week of gestation through the first twenty-eight days after delivery.

Perinatologist - a physician who has completed training in obstetrics and takes further training in the care of high-risk pregnancies.

Periodic breathing - breathing interrupted by pauses as long as 10 to 20 seconds. Periodic breathing is common in prematures and in full-term newborns.

Peripheral IVs - intravenous lines that go into "peripheral" veins, meaning small blood vessels near the skin's surface, usually in the baby's arms, legs or scalp.

Periventricular leukomalacia (PVL) - small cysts found in the brain that, if they persist, may result in cerebral palsy. The cause is not known, but may be associated with maternal infection or periods of low blood flow to the brain.

Persistent fetal circulation (PFC) - persistence, after birth, of a pattern of circulation typical of the fetus in which blood bypasses the lungs through an open ductus arteriosus.

Petechiae - a pin-point rash caused by tiny hemorrhages from the blood vessels close to the surface of the skin. Petechiae usually indicate clotting problems resulting from infection or injury.

pH - the symbol for hydrogen ion concentration. It expresses the degree to which a solution is acid or alkaline. The lower the pH, the more acid the solution.

Phenobarbital - a drug used to control seizures.

Phototherapy - a treatment for jaundice by placing fluorescent (blue or green) lights over the baby's bed to help break down bilirubin into a water-soluble form that can be eliminated in the kidneys.

Physical therapist (PT) - a therapist who treats problems of coordination and of the large motor skills.

PIE (pulmonary interstitial emphysema) - a complication in which there are many tiny tears in the air sacs or small airways of a baby's lung, causing air to leak out of them.

Placental abruption/abruptio - a pregnancy complication, commonly signaled by vaginal bleeding and abdominal pain, in which part of the placenta detaches from the wall of the uterus, affecting the blood and oxygen supply to the fetus. When the area of abruption is large, it may require an emergency, preterm delivery.

Placenta previa - a pregnancy complication, usually signaled by painless vaginal bleeding, in which the placenta partly or completely covers the cervix, so that when the cervix dilates, or during labor, it can tear and bleed. A cesarean delivery is often necessary to prevent a serious maternal or infant hemorrhage. This may be life-threatening to mother and baby.

Plasma - clear, fluid portion of blood (after the red blood cells have been removed).

Platelets - elements of the blood needed for proper clotting; also called thrombocytes.

Pneumogram (sleep study) or Pneumocardiogram (PCG) - a painless study of an infant's heart and respiratory patterns done over a continuous 12-hour period to detect any abnormal breathing patterns.

Pneumonia - an inflammation or infection of the lungs.

Pneumothorax ("collapsed lung") - A rupture in the lung. Pneumothorax is a collection of air in the chest resulting from a tear in the air sac of a baby's lung, causing air to leak out of the lung into the space between the lung and the chest wall. It can put pressure on the opposite lung and the heart causing the blood oxygen and the blood pressure to fall.

PO₂ (PaO₂) - the partial pressure of arterial carbon dioxide; a measure of the carbon dioxide content of the blood.

Polycythemia - an abnormally high number of red blood cells, a condition that causes "sluggish" circulation. In babies, it can cause breathing difficulties, low blood sugar, and jaundice.

Polyhydramnios - an excessive amount of amniotic fluid, which can overly distend the uterus, and lead to preterm labor and delivery. May be associated with problems of the fetus swallowing the amniotic fluid.

Positive end expiratory pressure (PEEP) - on a respirator, the constant amount of pressure exerted on the infant's lungs to keep them expanded during and after breaths.

Postpartum - after delivery.

Postural drainage (PD) - a method of tilting the baby in various positions to allow mucus to drain easily from his lungs.

Preeclampsia - a medical term to define the maternal condition of elevated blood pressure, edema of the hands and feet, and the presence of protein in the urine during a woman's pregnancy. Also known as toxemia or pregnancy-induced hypertension. When preeclampsia is severe, a medically indicated preterm delivery may become necessary.

Pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH) - see preeclampsia.

Premature infant - an infant who is less than thirty-seven completed weeks' gestational age at birth.

Premature rupture of the membranes (PROM) - the breaking of the membranes surrounding the fetus before the beginning of labor; may occur before a term or a preterm delivery.

Prenatal - before birth.

Progesterone - a hormone of pregnancy thought to protect the developing fetus.

Projectile vomiting - extremely forceful ejection of the stomach contents.

Prostaglandins - substances found in body tissues that can cause contractions of the smooth muscles and the widening of certain blood vessels. Prostaglandins are thought to be involved in the process of labor.

Pseudomonas - a type of bacteria.

PT - see physical therapist.

Pulmonary hypertension - an inability of the blood vessels of the lungs to relax and open up normally after birth. Poor circulation through the lungs and poor oxygenation of the blood result. Respiratory therapy and inhaled or IV drugs may be used to relax the lungs' constricted vessels to help treat this condition.

Pulmonary insufficiency of the premature (PIP) - a type of respiratory distress afflicting the youngest prematures. It is caused as much by an immaturity of the lung tissue as by a lack of surfactant. The treatment is the same as for RDS.

Pulmonary interstitial emphysema (PIE) - a complication in which there are many tiny tears in the air sacs or small airways of a baby's lung, causing air to leak out of them.

Pulse oximeter - a monitoring device used as a general indicator of a baby's oxygenation. This noninvasive device is taped to the skin, usually a finger or foot, for oxygen level readings.

PVL - (see periventricular leukomalacia) cysts in the white matter of the brain near the ventricles, indicating areas that have been permanently damaged.

----- Q -----

q - Medical abbreviation for "every."

q.d. - Medical abbreviation for "every day."

q.h. - Medical abbreviation for "every hour."

q.i.d. - Medical abbreviation for "four times a day."

q.o.d. - Medical abbreviation for "every other day."

q.s. - Medical abbreviation for "a sufficient amount."

q.wk. - Medical abbreviation for "every week."

----- **R** -----

Radiant warmer - an open-air bed with a heat source above it. This type of bed is used in the NICU immediately after delivery to allow easy access to the baby and also to help maintain a baby's body temperature.

Radiology (X-ray) Tech - a person who is trained in taking x-rays.

Rales - abnormal crackling noises in the chest made by air passing through congested bronchial tubes.

RBC - red blood cell

RDS - (respiratory distress syndrome) also called hyaline membrane disease, it is the result of a preemie having immature lungs. A baby with RDS is not able to breathe well on his own as small air sacs (alveoli) tend to collapse (atelectasis).

Red blood cells (RBC) - RBCs are a part of the body's blood that contains hemoglobin and carries oxygen to all the cells and tissues of the body.

Regionalization - a system for providing appropriate care to all mothers and infants within a specific geographical region. Perinatal care may be provided at primary (Level I), secondary (Level II), or tertiary (Level III or IV) centers depending on the risk status of mother and baby. The low-risk pregnancy can be managed at a primary center-a regular hospital delivery room and nursery, where basic emergency equipment and trained personnel are available if needed. A secondary center has trained staff and special equipment to care for a pregnant woman or for an infant with moderate problems. A tertiary, or third level, center has all the staff and technology needed to manage serious medical problems of the mother or infant. Intensive care nurseries are usually found in Level II, III or IV (tertiary) centers.

Resident - a doctor in his or her specialty training years.

Residuals - the amount of undigested food left in the stomach after a reasonable length of time has elapsed for digestion.

Respirator - - a mechanical device used to substitute for, or to assist with breathing.
See ventilation.

Respiratory distress syndrome (RDS) - a condition that affects the lungs of preterm infants. This is caused by lack of surfactant. Also referred to as hyaline membrane disease.

Retina - the lining of the back of the eye that receives visual images.

Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) - a disease affecting the retina of a preterm baby's eye. ROP can lead to serious eye complications and even blindness. Formerly called retrolental fibroplasia.

Retraction - a sunken appearance of the chest wall as the baby breathes. This means that the baby is working harder to breathe.

Retrolental fibroplasia (RLF), see retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) - an eye disease of prematures.

Rh factor - a type of protein that may or may not be present on a person's red blood cells.

RhoGAM shots - injections given a mother with Rh-negative blood after the birth of an Rh-positive baby. These injections prevent the mother from developing antibodies that could harm a future Rh-positive baby.

Ritodrine (Yutopar) - one of the betamimetic drugs used to stop preterm labor.

RLF - abbreviation for retrolental fibroplasias. See Retinopathy of prematurity.

Room Air (RA) - the normal air we all breathe which has an oxygen concentration of approximately 21%.

ROP - abbreviation for retinopathy of prematurity.

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) - a common virus that gives most people a cold, but can be more serious in premature babies, causing infections such as pneumonia or bronchiolitis.

Rubella - a virus that causes German measles and severe intrauterine infections.

Rx - the medical abbreviation for "prescription."

----- **S** -----

Scalp IV - an intravenous needle placed in a vein in the infant's scalp.

Scleral buckle - a surgical procedure used to repair a detached retina; it involves placing a band of silicone - like a best - around the sclera, or white of the eye.

Secondary center - see [regionalization](#).

Seizure - "short-circuiting" of the brain's electrical impulses. Seizures have a variety of causes and symptoms.

Sensorineural hearing loss - a hearing impairment resulting from damage to the structures of the inner ear or to the nerves that conduct sound impulses to the brain.

Sepsis - an infection of the blood or other tissue.

Septic or Sepsis work-up - a series of tests to check for the presence of infection.

Serous otitis - fluid accumulation in the middle ear.

Serum - the clear portion of the blood that remains after the red blood cells and clotting factors have been removed.

SGA - see [small for gestational age](#).

Shunt - 1. An artificially created passage between two areas of the body, as in a ventriculo-peritoneal shunt for hydrocephalus, a tube that drains fluid from the ventricles of the brain into the peritoneum (the abdominal cavity). 2. A naturally existing, but abnormal, connection between two areas of the body, as in a right-to-left or left-to-right shunt through the ductus arteriosus.

SIDS - (sudden infant death syndrome) crib death, the death of an infant during sleep from unknown causes.

Skin Temperature Probe - a small soft wire taped to the baby's skin to allow us to know the baby's temperature at all times.

Sleep study - see [pneumogram](#).

Small for gestational age (SGA) - a newborn is considered small-for-gestational age if her birth weight is below the tenth percentile on the standard growth curve for her age.

Social Worker - a person specially trained and licensed to help you with the various emotional, mental and financial stressors you may experience.

Sonogram - a picture produced by ultrasound.

Spastic diplegia - the most common type of cerebral palsy among preemies, it is characterized by stiff ("spastic") muscle tone, affecting mainly the legs and feet ("diplegia").

Special care nursery - see [step-down unit](#).

Speech and language pathologist - a specialist in the treatment of speech problems.

Sphingomyelin - a component of surfactant, the chemical which helps keep our lungs open. See surfactant.

Spinal tap - see lumbar puncture.

Step-down unit - a nursery for babies that provides less intensive care than that given in an NICU; may also be called an intermediate care nursery, a level II unit, or a special care nursery unit.

Strabismus - a misalignment of the eye muscles that may cause the eyes to turn inward (crossed eyes or esotropia) or turn outward (wall eye or exotropia).

Stress test - a test to monitor fetal heart rate changes in response to induced contractions. Abnormal heart rate patterns may indicate fetal distress.

Subarachnoid hemorrhage - bleeding in the subarachnoid space, the area around the outside of the brain.

Suction - a procedure to remove mucus and secretions from the lungs or stomach.

Sudden infant death syndrome - see [SIDS](#).

Surfactant - a substance produced by the lung that serves as a coating in the air sacs and keeps the tiny air sacs open between breaths. Surfactant is often lacking in preterm babies, and this can lead to respiratory distress syndrome or lung immaturity in the premature baby. Today there are man-made surfactants that can dramatically improve a preemie's respiratory status.

Symmetric growth restriction - when an SGA, or small-for-gestational-age baby, has a head circumference, length and birth weight, that are below the tenth percentile for her age.

----- T -----

Tachycardia - an abnormally fast heart rate. In an infant, above 180 beats per minute.

Tachypnea - a respiratory rate above what is considered normal for infants (above 60 breaths per minute).

Terbutaline (Brethine) - a tocolytic medication used to stop preterm labor.

Term infant - an infant born between approximately thirty-eight and forty-two weeks of gestation.

Tertiary center - see [regionalization](#).

Theophylline - a stimulant drug sometimes used in the treatment of apnea.

Thermoregulation - a regulation of body temperature.

Thrombocytes - see [platelets](#).

Thrombocytopenia - abnormal decrease in the number of blood platelets.

Thrush - a fungus infection of the mouth characterized by white patches on a red inflamed surface.

t.i.d. - the medical abbreviation for the Latin words meaning "three times a day."

Tocolytic drugs - drugs to relax the uterus and halt uterine contractions. They can be given to a pregnant woman to treat preterm labor.

TORCH - a group of maternal infections that can cause serious effects on the fetus: Toxoplasmosis, Other viruses, Rubella, Cytomegalovirus, and Herpes simplex virus.

Total parenteral nutrition (TPN; hyperalimentation) - a type of nutrition that is administered through intravenous infusion. TPN provides all of the essential nutrients needed.

Toxemia of pregnancy - see [preeclampsia](#).

Toxoplasmosis - an organism that causes intrauterine infection.

TPN - see *total parenteral nutrition*

TPR - medical abbreviation for temperature, pulse, respiration.

Trachea - windpipe; the tube that extends from the throat to the bronchial tubes of the lungs.

Tracheostomy ("Trach") - a surgical opening in the trachea, below the larynx (voice box), made to allow air to enter the lungs when the throat becomes obstructed.

Transcutaneous monitor (TCM) - monitoring device placed on the infant's skin that records blood oxygen or carbon dioxide levels.

Trimester - a period of three months. A 9-month pregnancy is divided into first, second, and third trimesters.

TTN (Transient Tachypnea of the Newborn) - a condition resulting in an excess of lung fluid at the time of delivery, causing an elevated respiratory rate until the fluid is absorbed.

Tube feeding - see gavage feeding.

Twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS) - a condition of the placenta that can occur in identical twin pregnancies. TTTS results in blood passing disproportionately from one twin baby to the other through connecting blood vessels within the shared placenta.

----- **U** -----

UAC/UVC (Umbilical Artery Catheter/Umbilical Vein Catheter) - a soft plastic tube inserted into an artery or vein in the baby's naval in order to give IV fluids or medications, to monitor blood pressure and obtain blood for tests.

UAL - umbilical artery line. See UAC/UVC.

Ultrasound (sonogram) - a diagnostic imaging technique where echoes of high frequency sound waves produce a picture of body tissues.

Umbilical catheter - See UAC/UVC

Umbilical cord - the connection between the baby and the placenta.

Upper respiratory infections (URI) - a cold; an infection affecting any portion of the respiratory tract above the larynx (voice box).

URI - see upper respiratory infection.

UTI - abbreviation for urinary tract infection; usually refers to infections of the bladder.

UVL - umbilical venous line. See UAC/UVC.

----- **V** -----

Vein - a blood vessel leading to the heart. Veins carry non-oxygenated blood from the body to the heart (except for the pulmonary veins that carry oxygenated blood from the lungs to the heart.)

Ventilation - mechanical breathing assistance.

Ventricle - 1. A small chamber, as in the ventricles of the heart. 2. Small chambers in the center of the brain where cerebrospinal fluid is made.

Vernix - white, fatty substance that protects the fetus' skin in utero.

Very low birth weight (VLBW) - an infant, of any gestational age, who weighs less than 1,500 grams at birth.

Virus - a tiny infectious organism that lives inside body cells.

Vision therapist - a therapist who helps visually impaired people make full use of their remaining sight.

Vitrectomy - this surgical procedure, used to repair a detached retina, involves removing some of the jelly-like substance that fills the eye (the vitreous humor), so the surgeon can reach and reposition the detached portion of the retina.

Vital Signs - measurement of the baby's temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure.

VP (ventriculo-peritoneal) shunt - a long-term treatment for hydrocephalus. A VP shunt is a long, plastic tube that is inserted surgically, to carry excess fluid from the ventricles in the brain, where it builds up, to the abdomen (or "peritoneum") where it can be reabsorbed.

----- **W** -----

Ward Clerk - the nursery secretary who answers the phone and helps coordinate all the baby's records.

Warmer - an open bed with an overhead heating unit allowing several people to care for the baby at the same time. A temperature probe taped to the skin measures and controls the baby's temperature. See radiant warmer.

WBC - abbreviation for white blood cell. See [leukocyte](#).

Wean - to slowly decrease and then stop an intervention. This could be used when stopping a medication or when removing certain technological support such as a ventilator.

Wheeze - whistling, humming, or raspy sound made during breathing, caused by obstructions in the respiratory tract.

White blood cells (WBCs) - WBCs are a part of the body's blood responsible for fighting against infection. See leukocyte.

----- X -----

X-ray - a diagnostic technique when an electromagnetic wave produces an image of internal body parts.

----- Y -----

Yeast (Candida albicans, monilia, thrush) - a microscopic fungus that can cause infection; yeast infections are common after antibiotic therapy.