

# What is a Neonatologist?

Although your pediatrician can solve most health problems of newborns, a *Neonatologist* is trained specifically to handle the most complex and high-risk situations.

If your newborn is premature, or has a serious illness, injury, or birth defect, a neonatologist may assist at the time of delivery and in the subsequent care of your newborn. If a problem is identified before your baby is born, a neonatologist may become involved to consult with your obstetrician in your baby's care during your pregnancy.

## What kind of training do neonatologists have?

Neonatologists are medical doctors who have had

- At least 4 years of medical school
- Three years of residency training in general pediatrics
- Three years of additional training in newborn intensive care
- Certification from the American Board of Pediatrics and by the Sub-board of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine

## What types of treatments do neonatologists provide?

Neonatologists generally provide the following care:

- Diagnose and treat newborns with conditions such as breathing disorders, infections, and birth defects.
- Coordinate care and medically manage newborns born premature, critically ill, or in need of surgery.
- Ensure that critically ill newborns receive the proper nutrition for healing and growth.
- Provide care to the newborn at a cesarean or other delivery that involves medical problems in the mother or baby that may compromise the infant's health and require medical intervention in the delivery room.
- Stabilize and treat newborns with any life-threatening medical problems.
- Consult with obstetricians, pediatricians, and family physicians about conditions affecting newborn infants.

Neonatologists work mainly in the special care nurseries or newborn intensive care units of hospitals. In some cases, after a newborn has been discharged from the unit, a neonatologist may provide short-term follow-up care on an outpatient basis. Your neonatologist will coordinate care with your baby's pediatrician.

## Where can I find a neonatologist?

Neonatologists practice in children's hospitals, university medical centers, and large community hospitals. Your pediatrician or obstetrician will be able to refer you to a neonatologist if your newborn baby needs this special care.

## Neonatologists—the best care for newborns

Newborn babies are not just small adults. A medical problem can mean a special challenge. Sometimes babies are born before their bodies are ready to leave the womb. Important organs such as the heart, lungs, stomach, and skin may not be mature enough to function without special help. Neonatologists have the special training required to evaluate and treat newborns' medical problems. In addition, neonatologists use equipment that is designed specifically for the tiniest patients.

If your pediatrician suggests that your baby needs to be evaluated by a neonatologist, you can be assured that your child will receive the best possible medical care.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

## From your doctor

American Academy  
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Web site—[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

Copyright ©2002  
American Academy of Pediatrics