# Pain Management: Information for Parents

Pain management is an important part of care in the neo- natal intensive care unit (NICU). While your baby is in the NICU, the doctors and nurses are doing everything they can to make sure your baby is comfortable and not in any pain. Although it is natural for you to be worried that your baby is hurting, there are many ways to prevent pain and make potentially painful procedures more comfortable.

There are many ways to lower pain without using medications. This is called *nonpharmacological pain management*. This includes

* wrapping the baby snuggly in a blanket
* holding the baby skin to skin, also called *kangaroo care*
* offering the baby a pacifier to suck on
* letting the baby nurse at the breast before, during, and after a painful procedure
* keeping the baby distracted with rocking, gentle touch, soft sounds, and low light
* giving the baby a solution of sugar water on their tongue or on a pacifier.

If your baby’s providers think that a necessary procedure will cause more pain, they can use many safe and effective medications to help relieve that pain. This includes everything from applying numbing cream to the skin to offering medicines to stop the pain.

If you’re worried that your baby is in pain, you can ask the NICU nurses to help you learn how to tell if your baby needs something (Is your baby hungry? Does he or she need a diaper change?) or if he or she is hurting. After going home, you can continue following these tips to help your baby if you think he or she is in pain:

* Wrap your baby in a blanket to provide comfort and to help him or her feel safe.
* Give your baby a pacifier or offer breastfeeding.
* Provide skin-to-skin care by holding your baby with their bare skin up against yours (kangaroo care).
* Keep lights and noise down to provide calm.
* Talk to your baby’s provider about medicines that can help with pain.

