Persistent Pulmonary Hypertension in the Neonate: Information for Parents

*Persistent pulmonary hypertension in the neonate* (PPHN) is high blood pressure in the lungs and is a serious respiratory disorder that primarily affects infants who are born full term or near term (usually 34 weeks or more). PPHN is frequently associated with respiratory problems.

During pregnancy, the baby’s mother and the placenta provide the baby with oxygen, and very little of the baby’s blood goes to the lungs. The blood vessels in the lungs are mostly closed, because the lungs are not being used. When an infant is born and takes his or her first breaths, these blood vessels expand and allow blood to go to the lungs to pick up oxygen. When these blood vessels do not fully relax or do not allow enough blood to reach the lungs, it is called PPHN. PPHN is very dangerous because it can limit how much oxygen the baby can deliver to his or her brain and organs.



The treatment of PPHN may include the use of oxygen, special ventilators that breathe for the baby at a very fast rate, a gas called nitric oxide, or even temporary heart lung bypass.

After treatment for pulmonary hypertension, your baby’s lungs will take weeks or even months to recover fully. It will be important to help protect your baby from catching colds or flus. Good handwashing and keeping your baby away from sick people and large crowds will help. It also will be especially important for your baby to see his or her pediatric provider and other specialists regularly to be screened for normal developmental milestones.