

How to Cope When You Are Home

While most parents find those first few months at home stressful, some parents tell us their most emotionally hard times were a year after their baby went home. If you are feeling this, know **you are not alone**. We can help you cope with these feelings.

"One year after my baby came home from the NICU he was doing very well, so I couldn't understand why a feeling of helplessness overcame me. Some days I felt anxious at a level that I had never before experienced. When it was explained to me that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was not uncommon in NICU graduate parents, I felt much less alone." —Tundi, mother of NICU graduate

You may:

- Have a loss of interest in doing things you usually do
- Have a hard time falling asleep or staying asleep
- Have a hard time focusing
- Not be able to remember parts of your baby's hospital stay
- Feel alone and removed from other people (like nobody understands you)
- Cry often, even about little things

"Surviving the NICU was only the first step in what turned out to be a very complex and frightening journey. Once we settled in at home, I started to experience feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression. It was a very frightening time trying to make sense of my world without the support I was used to in the NICU." —Dion, mother of NICU graduate

Many parents find it very helpful to talk with other parents who have had a baby in the NICU. Sometimes it is hard to meet with others. Connect with other parents at:

- NICU Families of Eastern Iowa (group) on Facebook
- shareyourstory.org (sponsored by The March of Dimes)

Some parents who have difficulty coping emotionally may benefit from expert help. Parents may have post-partum depression or PTSD. You can get expert support at:

- postpartum.net
- postpartum.net/Get-the-Facts/Postpartum-Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder
- beyondtheblues.info/
- mchb.hrsa.gov
- UI Health Care **Women's Wellness and Counseling Service** at 319-384-5499

We hope your transition home has gone well, but if you could use more support, we hope these resources will be helpful to you.

"There is hope. With proper support, you will grow strong and confident again." —Audrey, mother of two NICU graduates