

# Starting the Feeding Journey in the NICU or PICU

There are many ways to help your baby get ready to start feeding by mouth. In the NICU and PICU, we call this pre-feeding. Pre-feeding is a wonderful time for you to bond with your baby and learn how they communicate comfort and stress. Pre-feeding gives your baby positive experiences with touch, smell, and taste.

## You can give positive experiences with touch by:

- Doing skin-to-skin time with parents.
- Holding your baby in your arms.
- Helping your baby bring their hands to their face and mouth.
- Giving a pacifier during tube feedings if your baby is rooting or sucking.

## You can give positive experiences with smell by:

- Putting a cloth with breast milk or formula near your baby.
- Doing skin-to-skin time with parents during tube feedings.
- Putting a small drop of milk on their upper lip and bringing their hands to their face.

## You can give positive experiences with taste by:

- Pumping colostrum for oral cares.
- Letting your baby nuzzle at your pumped breast.
- Putting milk on your baby's fingers and bringing their finger to their mouth.
- Giving small tastes of milk on your baby's pacifier.

Touch	Smell	Taste
Skin-to-skin time with parents	Breast milk or formula on cloth	Nuzzling at pumped breast
Hold your baby in your arms	Skin-to-skin time with parents	Milk on baby's fingers with hands to mouth
Hands to face and mouth	Milk on upper lip with hands to face	Tastes of milk on pacifier