

Levels of Care: A Guide for Parents - *About the Levels of Care*

All birth hospitals that care for newborn babies deal with emergencies. Some hospitals specialize in caring for sick or small babies. Knowing about the level of care helps to match the needs of babies to the hospitals that can best care for them.

The Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care (WAPC) has guidelines based on the position of the Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). WAPC wants all Wisconsin hospitals that care for pregnant women and babies to review the guidelines and identify which level of care they provide. Information about this process is on the WAPC Web site, www.perinatalweb.org under "Major Initiatives."

How You Can Use This Guide if you are Expecting a Baby

You can use this guide in many ways:

- To decide where you would like your baby to be born
- To choose a maternity care provider
- To answer difficult questions, like:
 - "I had a high risk pregnancy with my first child and problems during the birth. I am pregnant again. Where should I give birth to my second child?"
 - "My baby will be born early or has a birth defect. Where should I give birth so my baby has the best care?"
 - "My new baby is sick. How do I find the best place to care for my baby?"

Summary of the Levels of Care

The list that follows is the level of hospital care and the services a hospital of that level should have. The higher the level of care (the larger the number), the more advanced the services are for the care of sick or small babies.

Level of Care	Services Available
Level I	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cares for healthy babies• Cares for healthy babies born up to 5 weeks before their due date• Cares for sick babies born less than 5 weeks before their due date until they can be moved to another hospital
Level IIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cares for babies born up to 8 weeks before their due date and weighing more than 3 pounds 5 oz• Cares for babies who are sick because they were born early. Babies might:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Have breathing that starts and stops* Need special beds, like an incubator* Not be able to suck from the breast or bottle* Have problems that will not last long and will not need more specialized care• Cares for babies born early and sick babies before they are moved to a newborn intensive care unit (NICU)• Cares for infants after intensive care isn't needed
Level IIB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides the same services as a Level IIA• Provides a breathing machine for problems that last less than 24 hours
Level IIIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cares for babies born up to 12 weeks before their due dates and weighing more than 2 pounds 3 oz who are more sick• Provides breathing machines for breathing problems• Performs minor surgery
Level IIIB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cares for very small infants less than 2 pounds 3 oz who are born less than 12 weeks before their due date and those who are very sick.• Provides a breathing machine for as long as needed• Offers ready access to special baby doctors and hospital staff• Can do special x-rays and heart checks• Can do surgery on most babies at the birth hospital or at a closely related hospital
Level IIIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides the same services as a Level IIIB nursery• Located inside a hospital that can provide heart lung bypass, anesthesia, and surgery for the most difficult problems including serious heart problems