

Webcams in NICU help new parents bond virtually, reduce stress

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Credit: Cleveland Clinic

Having a baby in the neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU, can be an emotional rollercoaster for new parents.

But research done at Cleveland Clinic Children's shows placing a live webcam in the NICU may allow for remote bonding and ease worry.

"The NICU is a very challenging environment. Parents are stressed out," explained Anirudha Das, MD, Cleveland Clinic Children's neonatologist and study author. "Many parents have [mental distress](#), as we call it, and it's challenging for them to come in all the time, so the hypothesis was that they may be using the webcam."

A NICU stay can range from days to months, making it hard for parents to visit their newborn every day, which can be stressful.

Researchers wanted to see how a live webcam would impact the situation. They studied 59 infants and how their families used a 24/7 NICU webcam.

Results show parents logged in more on days they couldn't visit. They also found that families who lived more than 15 miles away had more logins. In addition, parents who were suffering from depression and anxiety didn't come to visit in -person as often, but still logged into the webcam.

Overall, findings suggest having a virtual connection to their baby helped parents, especially those experiencing [stress](#).

"Our finding that on the days the parents were not able to come in, but they logged in more just shows that it was really helpful for the parents to bond with their children," said Dr. Das.

Next steps include exploring whether frequent use of NICU webcams increases breast milk production, which is important because NICU babies who are breastfed tend to have better outcomes.

Provided by Cleveland Clinic

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