

Jalissa C. — Neonatal Nurse

River Ridge Middle School

River Ridge School District

My dream career is to be a neonatal nurse helping newborns during their first week of life. They help parents learn how to care for their new babies with feeding, changing, holding, and bathing. They also spend time monitoring the babies to make sure they are okay. They help new moms with breastfeeding. Some babies have defects or abnormalities so they need to know what to look for and how to deal with them. They must be trained in resuscitation in case a baby stops breathing. Then they can conduct infant CPR. Also, some babies need oxygen when they are born. Neonatal nurses need to know how much oxygen they need and how all of the monitors work. Some babies are also too little to even cry. The nurses need to know what to look for to give the babies what they need like food or medicine or changing a diaper. Also, some babies are born with jaundice. This is where their skin has a yellow tint. The neonatal nurses need to know how much time the babies need to be under the blue lights.

Some babies are born too early too. Nurses who work with those babies are called NICU nurses. I was born 9 weeks early and spent time in the NICU when I was born. From what my parents told me, the nurses are the ones who helped them learn how to care for me since I had a feeding tube and several other tubes and monitors on me. The nurses also helped make my parents comfortable in knowing that I was in good hands. There were a few times when my Mom was holding me when I stopped breathing. Monitors would set off alarms. The nurses were not too far away and they tickled my feet and I started to breathe again. I just forgot to breathe sometimes. When my mom couldn't be at the hospital with me she had a phone number to call any time of the day and talk to my NICU nurse to see how I was doing.

Neonatal nurses must first become a registered nurse which is a two-year program. Then, they must also either earn an Associate Degree in Nursing which is a two-year program or a four-year Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. They must also have clinical experience working in a hospital. They need to learn how to be a nurse in the rest of the hospital before they can work with the babies and new parents. They are also often in the delivery room and part of the birthing experience. They help keep the mother comfortable, help them with pushing, and monitor the baby and mother before and after the baby is born. They help get the baby washed off and weighed and get the footprints.

They are also really good at wrapping babies up in blankets. They also need to know how to find the heartbeat of the baby when the baby is still in the womb. I feel that being a neonatal nurse would be very rewarding. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for some really awesome nurses and doctors who went to school to do what they do. I want to pay it forward by doing the same thing. It will not be easy, and I know that not all of the cases will have happy endings but each day will be different and I will do my best to help the babies and parents in their first hours and days of life. Plus new babies are so cute!