Overview

UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is the first place many newborn babies call home.

Since 1970, neonatal physicians, nurses and caregivers have provided specialized care to thousands of tiny patients, some small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. Their clinical expertise has led to U.S. News & World Report ranking the neonatology program among the nation’s best. As a result, we face an ever-increasing demand for neonatal care — for tiny patients born here or infants transferred from throughout the state.

The unit serves as a destination for specialized medical and surgical services, such as hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy and complex congenital heart diseases, and is nationally renowned for its physician expertise with treating congenital diaphragmatic hernia.

While our neonatal program was established in the 1970s, UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital’s NICU was built in 1984. At the beginning of 2016, the unit underwent renovations, and by spring 2017, it had expanded to its current 68-bed capacity.

The NICU is a member of the Florida Regional Perinatal Intensive Care Centers. UF physicians affiliated with UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital provide care here to our tiniest patients.
Recent Expansions

In February 2017, the Neonatal ICU officially opened its doors, unveiling a newly renovated space. Phase 1, which focused on creating four patient areas known as “neighborhoods,” was completed in November 2016, and construction on Phase 2 immediately followed.

The neighborhoods are housed in one contiguous space and named Ladybug, Dragonfly, Bumblebee and Hummingbird. While neonatal intermediate care and intensive care babies will generally be separated by neighborhood, each space is designed to be flexible to meet the needs of all NICU patients — regardless of their level of care.

The newest addition to the unit is a 1,000-square-foot space featuring a large family and visitor waiting area, sibling play space and family support room. Guests now have access to a refrigerator, microwave, coffee and lockers for their belongings.

The recently renovated NICU was transformed from a 12,632-square-foot unit to a 20,844-square-foot unit, which includes:

- 16 new care pods — added eight Level 3 beds (increasing from 22 to 30) and eight Level 2 beds (increasing from 30 to 38)
- Four private rooms that accommodate family members
- Dedicated Neonatal Neuro ICU section to monitor and care for infants with brain injuries
- Waiting area with a sibling play space
- Dedicated breastfeeding areas
- Warm and comforting design with a nature theme in harmony with the rest of the children’s hospital

Throughout our expansion, our teams have maintained world-class levels of care. By expanding and renovating the unit, we are able to provide infants and their loved ones with more room, privacy and support. NICU renovations have resulted in a family-focused, comfortable environment in which the medical teams can further develop the leading-edge neonatal care for which they’re known.

The construction budget for this project was $20.7 million.