

# Caffeine

## **What is caffeine?**

Caffeine is a drug that is a central nervous system stimulant. It is given to babies as a stimulant to remind them to breathe; it helps with their breathing. Caffeine stimulates the breathing center in the brain and helps reduce the number of apnea and bradycardia episodes. Apnea is the stopping of breathing; bradycardia is the slowing of the heart rate. If a baby stops breathing, their heart rate will generally slow down.

Caffeine also increases the strength and endurance of muscles that are important for breathing. We may give caffeine to little babies on ventilators, and try to get them off of the breathing machine sooner.

The caffeine given in the NICU is the same as that found in coffee.

## **How is caffeine given?**

Caffeine is either given by IV or orally (by mouth)

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## **How long will my baby need caffeine?**

Your baby will be on caffeine until your doctor discontinues it. Usually when the baby is older and the number of apneas has decreased.