

# NITRIC OXIDE

## **What is nitric oxide?**

Nitric oxide is a special gas that is inhaled, usually through a breathing tube, by some of the sickest babies. Nitric oxide relaxes the muscles in blood vessels, which then produces pulmonary vasodilatation (helps the lungs blood vessels open up). Simply put, it tries to help your baby's lungs get oxygen when they couldn't before.

## **Why does my baby need nitric oxide?**

Your baby's lungs are not able to get oxygen into the blood stream. There are several reasons for this, and your doctor will discuss the reasons with you. We have tried everything that we can to help your baby. Now it's time to try the nitric oxide. Your baby may have brain damage or even die if he cannot get oxygen into his blood.

## **Are there any side effects?**

Methemoglobinemia may occur from using nitric oxide. Methemoglobinemia is a form of hemoglobin that does not bind to oxygen. Your baby's blood is tested frequently for the presence of this. This is quite rare. No other major side effects are known.

## **If the nitric oxide works, is it stopped?**

If the nitric oxide works, it is slowly weaned off of your baby. The weaning process frequently lasts several days.

## **What if nitric oxide doesn't work?**

If nitric oxide doesn't work, your baby may need ECMO. ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) is similar to a heart lung bypass machine. ECMO is considered a last resort therapy, and not all babies meet the criteria for its use. Your doctor will discuss ECMO with you if your baby should need it.