Fetal Care Center Expansion Keeps Moms, Medically Complex Babies Together After Delivery

The Cincinnati Children’s Fetal Care Center recently expanded its Special Delivery Unit to include six dedicated labor, delivery and postpartum recovery rooms. The expansion makes it possible for more mothers of babies with complex conditions to deliver at Cincinnati Children’s, where pediatric subspecialists can provide immediate interventions.

The expansion is a collaboration between Cincinnati Children’s and TriHealth, a Cincinnati-based healthcare system. As part of the collaboration, Cincinnati Children’s provides expertise in fetal therapy, newborn intensive care and pediatric subspecialty services. TriHealth, with the largest group of maternal-fetal medicine specialists in the Cincinnati area, provides expertise in obstetrics. This integrated model is designed to achieve better outcomes for mom and baby.

The unit is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week for vaginal deliveries and C-sections. In addition to the new labor, delivery and postpartum recovery rooms, the expansion added a triage room and two operating rooms to increase access to fetal surgery procedures and C-section deliveries.

The option of delivering at Cincinnati Children’s is reserved for healthy moms who meet specific criteria. Previously, only about 25 women a year delivered at Cincinnati Children’s. That meant that the vast majority of medically fragile babies were born at other hospitals and urgently transported to Cincinnati Children’s. Now, many more babies will be born just down the hall from the hospital’s Level IV newborn intensive care unit (NICU). Mothers will recover on-site while their babies receive immediate care from pediatric subspecialists. This proximity encourages bonding and reduces stress for families.

“The expanded Special Delivery Unit allows our team to bring more services under one roof and control as many variables as possible before, during and after the baby is born,” says Jae Kim, MD, PhD, director of the Division of Neonatology.

Cincinnati Children’s is a destination center for families who are expecting a baby with a complex fetal condition.

“Some of the babies we deliver here have been diagnosed prenatally with a complex condition such as congenital diaphragmatic hernia or myelomeningocele and had fetal surgery at Cincinnati Children’s,” says Kim. “Others were evaluated at the Fetal Care Center prenatally but didn’t have any interventions prior to delivery — babies with gastroschisis are a good example. By delivering these babies here and keeping moms close by, we can manage our patients in a very structured way and optimize outcomes.”

**Full Scope of Fetal Care Services**

The Fetal Care Center is a collaboration of three hospitals — Cincinnati Children’s, TriHealth and University of Cincinnati Medical Center. It is one of only a few comprehensive fetal care centers in the country, offering the full scope of services:

- Comprehensive prenatal evaluation, fetal diagnosis and treatment
- Fetal surgeons who provide in-utero surgical interventions
- Sequenced, planned delivery for complex cases
- Postnatal care from highly specialized neonatologists and other providers
- In-house maternal-fetal medicine specialists

Most families who come to the Fetal Care Center are from the surrounding region, but some travel from other parts of the country and world.

Learn more about the Fetal Care Center at cincinnatichildrens.org/fetal.