

Safe Delivery for High-Risk Moms & Babies



Expert Advice From:

Albert Antonio, D.O., medical director, neonatal transport, Access & Transport Center, MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach

Transport Team Ensures Timely, Quality Care

Mothers-to-be with conditions that make their pregnancies risky, premature babies, and newborns with serious medical issues use the life-saving services of the neonatal transport for the Access & Transport Center.

Dr. Albert Antonio, board-certified pediatrician, and neonatologist, directs the program based at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach. The hospital is one of the nation's leaders in high quality perinatal care, setting the bar for timeliness, responsiveness, and easy of transport for patients.

"My unique role in transport medicine and outreach is to offer the basics of care to stabilize mothers and babies and transfer them from partner hospitals in the community, and when they are well and stabilized, transfer them back," Dr. Antonio explains.

"We draw patients from Los Angeles and Orange Counties and sometimes as far as Riverside and Bakersfield, thanks to our close working relationships with ambulance and helicopter services."

Caring for the sickest, smallest, and most medically fragile mothers and babies means minimizing risk, providing the best care, and reassuring patients and their partners. A recent American Medical Association study showed that babies born to high-risk mothers at Level IV neonatal intensive care units, like Miller Children's & Women's, had higher rates of survival.

High-risk pregnancies include women carrying multiple fetuses, in vitro pregnancies, and those to women with medical conditions, like diabetes and hypertension.

"These types of mothers and babies have special needs that their OB-GYN providers are watching closely," Dr. Antonio says. "We want to ensure coordination of care. Care that is timely can mean prolonging the pregnancy so that the baby has the best chance of survival without complications."

Miller Children's & Women's is the only hospital in LA and Orange Counties where mom and baby receive 24/7 specialized care under one roof. Maternal-fetal medicine specialists, OB hospitalists and neonatologists are always in the hospital to assist with pregnancy or delivery complications.

"It's a one-stop shop for our patients," Dr. Antonio says. "If a woman is identified as a high risk, her doctor and a maternal-fetal medical specialist can meet and quickly involve all the sub-specialists who will most benefit the mother's overall care."

"In some cases, the mother on the same day can tour our neonatal intensive care, pediatric, and maternity units," he adds. "If the baby has a condition that will require surgery, the mother can meet with the surgeons who can answer all her questions and explain what it means for her and her baby."

As part of a team of 10 neonatologists, Dr. Antonio joins more than 300 nurses, as well as surgeons, therapists, social workers, and other specialists who make up the team serving mothers and babies.

At a given time, the hospital has as many as 36 'small babies,' or premature infants born weighing less than 3 lbs. "That's a high number because many hospitals don't have dedicated small baby programs," he says. "With 96 beds, we are one of the West Coast's largest neonatal intensive care units."

"When babies are born with a high-level neonatal intensive care unit under the same roof as a comprehensive maternity center, we can provide the right medicine and the right treatment at the right time," Dr. Antonio observes.



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