That place was University of Minnesota Amplatz Children’s Hospital’s Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Logan spent the first 119 days of his life on that NICU. For the first 10 days, his parents couldn’t even hold him because he was so fragile. The Motzkos were finally able to bring Logan home just before his first Christmas.

“I can’t do justice to how great they were,” Misty Motzko says of the team that cared for Logan and his frantic parents. “We’re very fortunate we were there.”

Today 3-year-old Logan is “talking up a storm,” his mother says, and often repeats his favorite phrase: “no way.” He loves to find train tracks and started preschool in the fall.

Lifesaving care, research, and education

About 750 infants are admitted annually to Amplatz Children’s Hospital’s NICU, where the team takes a family-centered approach to caring for those premature and critically ill babies. Some of their mothers have already spent weeks or months in the care of University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview’s Maternal-Fetal Medicine Center. Physicians there work in
You can help tandem with the NICU team to provide a seamless transition for high-risk babies and moms.

The NICU doctors at Amplatz Children’s Hospital—all faculty members in the Division of Neonatology in the University of Minnesota Medical School’s Department of Pediatrics—are recognized nationally for their clinical and laboratory research aimed at maximizing outcomes like Logan’s and improving the lives of all children who begin their life journey on the NICU. Our experts are:

- Developing a less invasive way to administer surfactant—a fluid, often deficient in preemies, that helps the lungs’ tiny air sacs remain open for normal breathing.
- Examining the effects of iron deficiency, abnormal glucose levels, and medications on the developing brain.
- Identifying the best ways to prevent the fungal infection Candida albicans in premature infants by working to understand how its basic biology leads to such devastating disease in babies.
- Researching the effects of neglect and nutritional deprivation on brain development, overall growth, and long-term health.

Our team is able to conduct this work because of the many altruistic families that choose to participate in clinical research. Logan’s family, for example, chose to participate in a study evaluating whether a nutrition plan, designed to replicate the nutrients a baby would get in the womb, could help premature babies grow as if they were still in the womb.

That’s just one of about 20 neonatal clinical studies in progress today at the Amplatz Children’s Hospital NICU. Others focus on eliminating infections and determining how factors such as nutrition, illness, environment, and cognitive development affect the way premature babies grow and develop.

And we’re passing on our new knowledge to caregivers in Minnesota and beyond. More than 80 percent of Minnesota’s neonatologists were trained at the University of Minnesota, and chances are good that most of the other neonatology health professionals you will meet in our state were educated here as well.

NICU Follow-Up Clinic: A leader in ensuring bright futures

At University of Minnesota Amplatz Children’s Hospital, NICU babies and families also receive care and guidance once they’ve gone home.

Continuing the University’s tradition of innovation, our NICU Follow-Up Clinic was one of the first in the nation to take a multidisciplinary approach to supporting the growth and development of NICU graduates through childhood. The clinic works hand-in-hand with the University’s Center for Neurobehavioral Development, which has created and implemented a variety of unique tools to evaluate development and cognition in infants and children providing a home for dozens of clinical research studies.

The NICU Follow-Up Clinic staff tracks milestones such as motor development, cognitive skills, and language development throughout the child’s young life connecting families with additional services as needed. Such early intervention ensures that each child has the best chance for optimal development—and a bright future.