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by **Olivia Weitz**
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NICU facility coming to West Valley Medical Center

\$1 million Caldwell facility will be by finished this summer

CALDWELL — When it's finished, the new neonatal intensive care unit now under construction at West Valley Medical Center will give newborns with special needs and their families the care the need rather than being transferred to other regional hospitals.

Next week, the hospital will begin construction on its first NICU unit, a \$1 million facility that will provide care for babies as young as 34 weeks, according to hospital spokeswoman Wendy McClain.

In the past, babies born prematurely at West Valley would have to transfer to hospitals such as St. Luke's in downtown Boise, McClain said.

"This allows mother and baby to stay together within our hospital and ultimately stay closer to home," she said.

McClain said the expansion will meet a growing demand for advanced care of high-risk babies, which is growing as the area's population continues to expand. She said hospital staff, including a neonatologist and neonatal nurse practitioners, will receive training in neonatal care to operate the new facility.

Jennifer Wagenaar, who is the chief nursing officer at West Valley Medical Center, said from a nurse's perspective, having babies and mothers in the same location will make it easier to provide patient-centered care for issues like breast feeding education.

"We know how important it is for moms to stay close to babies," she said.

The NICU facility, to be located near the existing maternity center, can accommodate up to four newborns. It is expected to open this summer.

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