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Family News



The NICU Family News is produced by the Saint Barnabas Medical Center (SBMC) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Family Advisory Council (FAC). It is designed to provide you with information we hope you will find useful during and after your family's stay in the NICU.

DID YOU KNOW...

...over 2 million germs can live on your cell phone/camera at any one time. Always gel or wash your hands after touching your phone or any electronic device in or near the NICU.

NICU Parents, New For You In 2012

Over the last year or so our volunteer NICU graduate parents have been hard at work with NICU staff to help make improvements to benefit you and your baby. Some of these are listed here along with other important things for you to know while your baby is in the NICU.

1. There are new cell phone usage signs up all around the NICU and NICU family areas. They look like STOP signs and explain how there are over two million germs living on our cell phones all the time. We know this germey device may also be your lifeline to the outside world and the rest of your family, but these germs can be very bad for the sick and premature babies in the NICU. With this in mind, the signs urge you to **wash or gel your hands after touching your device** (phone, camera, i-pad...). The signs also ask you not to make or take calls inside of the NICU. Lastly, they explain that it's okay to text, e-mail or take pictures but NOT while you are holding your baby.
2. We have classes for siblings of NICU babies to help them adjust and understand what is going on in an age-appropriate way. For more information about this, please read the Sibling Support Story/Interview on the next page. Also know that if you want to arrange one of these groups for your other children while your baby is in the NICU, you can call Jennifer Barreiro at 973-322-8408.
3. We finished a 20 minute, Introduction to the NICU, video and are hoping it will be available on the hospital patient channel by January. Until that time, you can view the video in chapters on the computer closest to the printer in the library. Just double click on the icon for the video on the desktop and it will take you to the hospital website where the video is located. You can also access that part of the website by going directly to <http://tinyurl.com/3gj2lm4> on any computer. The NICU social workers also have DVD copies of the video you can view in the hospital if you let them know you are interested. A Spanish translation of the video is on the way too.

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NICU Sibling Support

Interview with Jennifer Barreiro, CSW (NICU Social Worker) and Danielle Martello BA, CCLS (Child Life Specialist)

Jennifer and Danielle lead NICU Sibling groups that meet in the NICU Family Lounge. Siblings of all ages are welcome and you can call the social worker (Jennifer Barreiro 973-322-8408) to set up a meeting at a time that is good for you and your child/children. Over the last several months, the FAC also developed a coloring/activity book to be used in this group and a Parent Guide to Sibling Adjustment in the NICU. More information about the groups follows here but if you have any further questions, please ask your NICU Social Worker.

Q: What do you hope the sibling groups will offer NICU families?

A: Jennifer: We designed the group to be educational and as informative as possible to make the NICU less scary and easier to understand for the siblings. Also, the group helps facilitate discussions and understanding among the entire family to address questions, concerns and feelings. Working closely with the Child Life Department we designed a picture book/guide to show real-life images of the NICU and some of the common equipment. This allows siblings to see what it looks like in the NICU so that those who can visit will be prepared and those who cannot visit (because they are not old enough or not immunized) understand where the parents and families go to see the baby.

Q: Why do you think the addition of these groups is so important for NICU families?

A: Danielle: Visiting a new baby brother or sister is a HUGE highlight in any family's life. This is specifically important for older siblings, because they are able to meet and get to know a brand new person that will be a part of the family. However, when the new baby brother or sister is admitted into the NICU, there are often additional questions, fears and concerns. Child life specialists have training and experience in helping families with these sibling issues. We act as a member of the family-centered care approach and are there to increase positive coping in the NICU. The child life specialist helps provide age appropriate preparation for the siblings visit, using a photo book, a teaching (baby) doll that represents a NICU infant, an activity book, age appropriate language and practical activities. The specialist attempts to clear up any questions or confusion and create a sense of understanding and comfort. Together with the social worker, this group creates an educational, interactive and supportive experience for siblings and parents in the NICU.



Pictured, left, is Danielle during a NICU Sibling Group and on the right is Jennifer.

Q: Do you have any other suggestions for parents about talking to their children about the NICU?

A: Jennifer: Try to include your other children. Talk to them about how the baby is doing. Keep it simple and age appropriate by using words they can understand. It can also help to provide examples whenever possible. There are also some story books that can help with the discussions and educate about the NICU. We have several of them for you to look at or use while you are here, in the NICU family library. Show the sibling pictures and let them ask questions and make observations. Also, parents can utilize art and play to help initiate a conversation about the baby in the NICU. i.e Draw a family picture together, ask the sibling to write a story about the family or write something to the baby and read it together. Another suggestion would be to reassure the sibling that he/she did nothing wrong and in no way are they responsible for the baby in the hospital.

A Star is Born and A Miracle is Not Far Behind...

It was New Year's Day 2008. I was getting ready to go do my baby registry but somehow decided against it. Around 8:00 p.m. that night I had some bleeding and contractions but thought they were the Braxton-hicks contractions I had read about. I decided to go to the hospital to check it out anyway. As I arrived all the staff there was very helpful and quickly determined that I was 3 centimeters dilated.

It was at that moment that my heart sank and my worry began. Here I was 34 weeks into my pregnancy and my baby might come early. I had heard all of the horror stories of pre-term labor and I started crying. The nurses kept me as calm as they could when the doctor came in and said it was time to prepare me for delivery.

At 10:22 a.m. my star was born, Cadel Talib, weighing 5lbs., 3oz. Cadel had to stay in the NICU with a feeding tube in his nose and all the lights and beeps going off around him. The experience was scary but I felt I had all the help I could get, emotionally, physically and mentally throughout his two-week stay in the NICU. When it was time for him to come home, I felt at ease and confident in myself as a mother after being taught by the NICU staff and graduate NICU parents. Their kind words and support made all the difference.

Fast forward to 2010... In November of 2010, I found myself pregnant again with my second son. I had to go on bed rest just five months into my pregnancy. Emotionally drained, on February 7, 2011, around 3:30 p.m., I got up from my permanent position on the couch and felt my water break; I was 34 weeks and 6 days along.

At the hospital, I was already used to the routine and was prepared to deliver the baby; my husband on the other hand was a nervous wreck. During the labor process I had a placental abruption and they had to do an emergency c-section to save the baby and me. The procedure was a success and entering the world at 6:22 p.m. was my little miracle, Kaeden Tymiere, weighing 5lbs, 12oz. We received a NICU Parent Handbook and it became our bible! (They didn't have that back in 2008 when I had Cadel).

I was at home resting and making frequent visits to the NICU to see Kaeden, but dad took it hard. He sometimes went to the hospital at 1:00 a.m. to spend feedings with Kaeden and other times he went in the middle of the night just to watch Kaeden sleep. No matter the time, we were welcomed with open arms. Kaeden stayed in the NICU for a week and a half.

The care and support we received from the NICU staff and graduate parents was wonderful. Now, Cadel is 3 years old and Kaeden is 10 months old. Both are doing great and so are mom and dad who are ready to share their story and support other NICU families. - **Chanele B.**



Miracle Walk Update

This past October we had another successful Miracle Walk, attended by almost 2,000 participants. NICU graduates and their grateful families and friends, and staff all took part in the day. This year's event raised about \$380,000 for the NICU. As always, the money raised will help purchase special state-of-the-art NICU equipment which will help the incredible NICU staff continue to provide the highest level of care possible to the NICU babies. All who came enjoyed the DJ, balloon artists, face painters and costumed characters. Mark your calendar now and save the date for the 2012 Miracle Walk:



12th Annual Miracle Walk To Benefit the SBMC NICU: October 7, 2012
www.miraclegwalk.com www.facebook.com/miraclegwalk

Important Phone Numbers:

NICU
973-322-5300

NICU Step-down (3100)
973-322-5310

NICU Nurse Manager
973-322-5345

NICU Social Workers
973-322-5503 or 8408

Birth Certificate Office
973-322-5327

Lactation Consultants
973-322-5684

NICU High Risk Infant
Follow-Up Program
973-322-2631

Want to Help the Family Advisory Council?

The FAC is made up of graduate parents dedicated to helping new NICU parents. We meet monthly to discuss ways to do this. We're always looking for recent graduate parents to share their experiences and ideas to make our NICU the best it can be. We welcome your ideas and participation. Contacts:

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Coordinator
esteffen@barnabashealth.org
973-322-5453

Hayley Hirschmann
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Keeping Baby Healthy at Home

With any newborn at home, you want to try to avoid having common colds in your home. But from about October to April/May, you also want to avoid Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), an easily spread cold virus that attacks the respiratory tract. This can be especially serious for premies because of their immature lungs. Some high-risk babies will get a monthly shot of Synagis (<http://synagis.com/insurance.aspx>) to help protect them from severe RSV.



Other things you can do to help keep baby well include:

- washing hands often and using antibacterial gel
- keeping your baby away from crowds for several months
- not allowing your baby to put other children's toys near their mouth
- asking visitors (and strangers) not to touch your baby's hands or mouth to help prevent the spread of germs
- washing baby's bedding and items she mouths often
- NOT smoking around your baby

Our tips for keeping your NICU baby healthy around school-age siblings:

- Have siblings wash hands when they first come home from school
- Have them take off their shoes in the house
- Maybe even change clothes from school outfit to play outfit
- If they are sick, try to have them stay at least six feet away from the baby and cover their mouth/nose when coughing/sneezing
- Encourage the use of antibacterial gel and keep it in several easy-to-reach places the child can get to
- Let the school know you have a premie at home and ask them to alert you to any illnesses that may be floating around the school
- For younger school kids, maybe a show and tell about his/her siblings (either with pictures) and tell the class the importance of hand washing and hygiene
- Set up more play dates outside the home than in the home (and wash those hands!)

New For You In 2012, cont'd from page 1

4. The NICU Parent Bulletin Board is located just outside the main NICU to the left of the phone where families get buzzed into the unit. It has lots of useful information for you and always has a monthly calendar with dates for classes for parents, siblings and monthly NICU pizza nights for the whole family.
5. To support pumping breast milk once you go home from the hospital, the NICU has TWO pumping areas with a total of five pumping stations. Ask any of the NICU staff to show you where they are. Also remember there are lactation consultants available Monday through Saturday during daytime hours. They hold a class each of those mornings at 10:15 and you can reach them by calling 973-322-5684.