

nicu Family News



Big Brothers and Sisters of the NICU Babies

Having a baby in the NICU can be a stressful time for families. Children may have many different feelings during this time and they need your support. Having a baby in the NICU can be made easier for your children when they understand what is happening. Here are some helpful tips from other NICU parents, depending on your child's age.

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...

You can watch a 20 minute "Introduction to the NICU" video on any hospital TV (even in the NICU Family Lounge). It's on channel 62 each day at 12:15 pm, 5:30 pm, and 10:45 pm and in Spanish on channel 63 at 8:30 am and 7:30 pm. You can also find it in chapters at <http://tiryurl.com/3gj2lm4>. Try to watch it in the first few days of your baby's NICU stay. You'll be glad you did!

■ ■ Saint Barnabas Medical Center
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The SBMC NICU is now on Facebook
www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU 

94 Old Short Hills Road, Livingston, NJ 07039
1-888-724-7123 barnabashealth.org/sbmc

- Have your children make a card or picture to hang in the baby's isolette. They can also record a song or story you can play for baby to help them bond.
- Answer your children's questions. Use words your children can understand. Do not over explain, but be honest. Offering information can help the child feel more comfortable to ask about the baby. It's also okay to say, "I don't know" when you don't have all the answers.
- Encourage communication. Let your children talk, ask questions and share their feelings/needs. Do not assume a lack of questions means a lack of interest. Kids may express their feelings more easily through art or activities. Try to accept their feelings even if their comments are negative.
- Share your own feelings. Explain that when you are sad, you cry. You can tell your children you are tired or worried about the baby, but be careful about the intensity of the feelings you share. You want to be careful not to overwhelm them with your emotions.
- Reassure your children. Explain that nothing they said, or did, or did not do, caused the illness or prematurity. Children sometimes blame themselves when something difficult is going on.
- Arrange special time. Try to set aside time for your older children so they can look forward to having all of your attention, even if it's for a short time. There are many activities you can do together including read a book, take a walk, go for ice cream, draw pictures, tell stories and have "cuddle time."
- Try to keep their routines as normal as possible. You may need to ask others for help in order to do this but it's worth it because routines are very important to children and keeping their routine can help them feel more of a sense of control and relieve some anxiety.

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Interview With Jean Tutschek, MSN, RNC NICU Patient Care Coordinator/Night Shift

Q: How long have you been working in the NICU?

A: I have been working in the NICU for 28 years, here at SBMC for 26 years (4 years as the Educator, 14 years as a Staff RN and 8 years as a Patient Care Coordinator).

Q: How did you know you wanted to become a NICU nurse?

A: I've always known that I wanted to be a nurse. I was the oldest of 4 and was the one everyone came to for bumps, bruises and splinters. It took a lot of convincing on my part for my parents to send me to a BSN program (I knew I wanted to go on for my MSN), as it was the 70s and my father didn't think I needed to go to college.

I became a NICU nurse by a happy accident. I was working in the Emergency Department and needed a change and decided to go to Newborn Nursery (NBN). The hospital I was at had one staff for NBN and NICU, so I said I would give it a try and found that I really enjoyed working in the NICU.

Q: What have you liked the most about working in the SBMC NICU?

A: Watching the babies grow and get healthy enough to go home, and supporting the parents.

Q: What do you think is one of the best things our staff is doing for our families?

A: Having them participate in the care of their babies and skin-to-skin care (also called Kangaroo Care). I personally really enjoy teaching parents about their babies and how to care for them.

Q: Why do you think it is important for siblings to visit the NICU (when appropriate)?

A: I feel it is important so that they can bond with their new sibling and incorporate them into the family unit.

Q: What does Family Centered Care mean to you?

A: That all members of the family unit participate in the care of the baby.

Q: What do you think is the most beneficial change in the way the NICU has been treating babies and families over the recent years?

A: We are encouraging families to participate in the care of their babies, instead of just being observers. This helps families feel more in control and more confident when it comes time to take their babies home.

Q: What suggestions or advice do you have for NICU families?

A: Be here in the NICU as much as possible to care for your baby, but remember that you also need to find the right balance and rest and take care of yourself too. Your baby will get better and come home and you need to be prepared and healthy to take care of them.

Q: Any other questions or a personal fun fact you would like folks to know about you?

A: Nursing isn't what I do, it's who I am! I am a single mom who raised two wonderful daughters who are now young adults. Nursing and SBMC allowed me to support myself and my children, but also allowed me to adjust my schedule to be there for them as often as possible. We all still live together in an apartment we've outgrown with our 2 guinea pigs, 1 large rabbit and a beta fish. Reading is my passion; I try to read every day. I'm also a huge Big East College Basketball fan and follow the Villanova and Seton Hall teams (my alma maters).



Jean Tutschek, MSN, RNC

A Family Letter

“Jay” means Victory in Sanskrit (an ancient Indian Language). Little did we know that our son would have to fight a battle for his first breath!

At exactly 24 weeks into my pregnancy with Jay, I had a massive rupture and bleed followed by a call to 911 and was rushed to Saint Barnabas Medical Center (SBMC). It was not the physical pain or discomfort that made it hard, it was the fear of losing my baby, the pain of being away from my older son and my husband, and the fear of the endless complications that were possible due to premature birth. The fears were simply endless, but having a wonderful and supportive husband and the most understanding 3½ year old son made the time at the hospital a little easier.

When I was pregnant with my older son a nurse told me, “Babies are born when it is their birthday”. For my second son (after 4 weeks on hospital bedrest), it was June 25, 2014. At 28 weeks at an even 1000g (or 2 pounds, 3 ounces), my baby Jay was delivered naturally and taken to the NICU. For the next 2 months, my husband and I visited our son in the NICU at



5:00 am so that we could give him the breast milk I had pumped, spend time with him, then head to work and be able to spend time with our older son in the evening.

It was amazing to see how attached my older son Veer was to his brother who hadn't even come home. I was a bit worried as to what he may think or feel to see his brother in an incubator with all those tubes. But, he was so excited to meet him and had brought a picture of himself to keep at Jay's bed side. (continues on page 4)



Register yourself, your family or your team right away
at www.miraclegwalk.com.

Important Phone Numbers:

NICU
973-322-5300

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

NICU Nurse Manager
973-322-8938

NICU Social Worker
973-322-5503

NICU Case Managers
973-322-2045
973-322-2678

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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973-322-5453

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A Family Letter (continued from page 1)

Every weekend, Veer visited Jay at the NICU with us. Veer's 4th birthday was just a few days after Jay's birth. Even though I was still not feeling 100 percent after a month of bed rest, I was busy making goody bags for his friends when Veer reminded me to make a bag for his baby brother! That cleared all doubts in my mind about how Veer felt about his brother. Every weekend, Veer looked forward to seeing Jay at the NICU and followed all the instructions given by the nurses, scrubbed his hands well, and whispered rhymes to his brother.

Finally the day came, after just over two months, when we brought Jay home! Thinking of all of this seems so unreal today because I am blessed to be alive and see my beautiful and healthy kids screaming and playing in the background as I write this. I think I feel comfortable sharing this because if you are going through something similar, I want to tell you that there is hope and miracles do happen!

Words cannot begin to describe our heartfelt gratitude for all the efforts and the care given to Jay by the doctors, nurses, social workers and staff of the SBMC NICU. We will be eternally grateful to them!

-Padma, Mayukh, Veer and Jay.

Big Brothers and Sisters of the NICU Babies

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- If your children are in school, tell their teachers about your baby in the NICU. Ask them to show extra kindness and understanding toward your children while your baby is in the NICU.
- Prepare them to see their brother/sister in the NICU or upon coming home. Show them pictures and explain anything (tubes...) that need explaining before they see their sibling. Read them appropriate stories about having a sibling in the NICU (several can be found to read in the NICU Library but please do not take them from this area).
- Bring your child with you to see their NICU sibling. Many older siblings can start to bond with their baby brother or sister while the baby is still in the NICU. It is recommended that brothers and sisters who come spend time in the NICU be at least 3 years of age and they can do this any time except during shift changes (6:30-7:30 am and pm). If a sibling is less than 3 years old and you choose to bring them to the NICU, your NICU baby will stay in their isolette or crib during the visit. All siblings must be healthy and pass a health screening to enter the NICU. Of course they must also follow all hand washing procedures that adults need to follow.