

# Supporting Your Small Baby in the NICU

(Premature infants less than 32 weeks gestation)



**There are many ways for you to participate in your small baby's care before your baby can be taken out of the Giraffe incubator. We encourage you to do as much as you feel comfortable with. Remember to always use hand sanitizer before touching your baby.**

## Swabbing:

As soon as Mom can provide even a drop of breast milk or colostrum, a swab dipped in the milk can be rubbed on the inside of your baby's cheeks and gums where the many benefits of breast milk can be absorbed. Your baby will be soothed by the taste, protected by Mom's immunities, and receive pain relief. Your nurse will help you with this and it can be done as often as you like.

## Hand Hugs:

Hand hugs can be done at any time. Ask your nurse to turn on the Giraffe's air curtain, which helps to prevent warm air from escaping the incubator. Open the port hole doors and talk to your baby quietly to prepare him for your touch. Then gently cup your hands around your baby's head and feet. Please keep your touch still, as stroking can irritate a premature baby. Continue to talk quietly to your baby in a soothing voice. Always close the port hole doors quietly.

## Supportive Containment:

You might be at the bedside when your baby needs care or interventions that cause him some pain or distress. Suctioning, heel sticks for blood samples, and feeding tube insertions are some examples. Your baby's nurse may ask you to support and soothe your baby by cupping the baby's head, containing the arms or legs within your hands, providing a pacifier, and/or talking quietly. Ideally, supportive containment should be started a few minutes prior to the start of the stressful intervention.

## Taking The Temperature:

Your baby's nurse will teach you how to take the baby's temperature with an electronic thermometer. It is usually done with each assessment before the diaper change.

## Diaper Change:

When your baby is ready, your nurse will teach you how to change the diaper. Provide boundaries around your baby's body to prevent distress. Move your baby slowly and gently. Your nurse will show you how to lift your baby by the hips to avoid lifting the legs too high.

## Positioning:

Your baby should be in a tucked position with arms and legs bent up and toward the center of the body. Positioning aids will help to support and contain your baby in a good position. If your baby appears uncomfortable or out of position, ask your nurse to reposition your baby. You may assist by containing your baby during the process.