

**A newsletter for
Sunnybrook NICU
families and their
friends**

In this Issue:

- Learning about baby massage
- Premie Picnic!
- Milk & cookies every Monday

Thanks to Scot Campbell for the use of his photo.

Something you'd like to see in the newsletter?

We would love to hear from you!

Please email ideas to Kate, the Parent Coordinator, at kate.robson@sunnybrook.ca, or just let me know when you see me in the unit. I'm in Monday, Wednesday and Thursday or by appointment.



Welcome to Sunnybrook

A message for you from graduate families of the NICU at Sunnybrook and the Family Advisory Committee (FAC):

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

One of the most challenging things about being in the NICU is getting used to the noise. Our unit is, at present, the only single-room NICU in

Canada, which means it's a bit quieter than most. But the noise can still get to you.

Researchers say that the best way to address stressful noise is to give yourself a "sound break." Treat yourself to some silence or pleasant sounds. Deep breathing and practicing "mindfulness meditation" can also help.

It's also a good idea to take advantage of the good weather and Sunnybrook's extensive gardens by going outside for lunch or to take a walk.

Remember – it's hard to take care of anyone else if you're not feeling good.

We wish the best for you and your family.

You're invited to Pizza Night!

Our pizza nights, hosted by grad dads Sabir and Dave, have been a hit! We will be continuing these for the next few months, and encourage all family members to attend.

While the idea of our dad-hosted pizza night is to create an opportunity for NICU fathers to meet each other, the event is open to all. Don't be shy!

Pizza nights start at 7pm and are always in the Family Room. Our next few pizza nights will be:

Tuesday April 17

Thursday May 3

Tuesday May 15

Thursday June 7

Tuesday June 19
(special Father's Day edition!)



Photo credit:
Ricardo/zone41.net

Learn about baby massage

We are so excited to announce we will be holding baby massage classes starting in April for our NICU families. The classes will be free but we will need participants to pre-register, since there are only 8 available spots per class and we anticipate a lot of interest. Not all premature babies are ready for massage, but parents can use these techniques after discharge or when their babies reach the appropriate gestational age. Please bring a soft-bodied doll or teddy to practice on; we have some you can borrow as well.

Our teacher is Cindy McNeely, R.M.T. who has been a Registered Massage Therapist since 1985.

As well as having a diverse clinical practice, she has taught in numerous Massage Therapy Colleges since 1988. She began a Perinatal Massage Therapy student program within Women's College Hospital in 1995 which has continued in the new location of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

Along with extensive practice working with pregnant and birthing women, she has taught baby massage for many parents within the home and clinical setting as well as for postnatal groups, public health, and within hospital settings. She has witnessed the important effects of massaging babies and is thrilled to teach the benefits and

techniques of baby massage to parents and healthcare staff.

You can reach Cindy by visiting the Trimester website at www.trimesters.on.ca

All classes will be on Sundays. Dates for classes are:
April 22, 1pm
May 27, 1pm
June 17, 1pm
July 22, 1pm.



Cindy McNeely (L) and one happy baby (R)

123s of handwashing

We all know how to wash our hands, right? Turns out there are some techniques you can use to make sure your hands are as clean as can be.

First, we have a "bare arms" policy in the NICU. That means no rings, watches, bracelets or other arm jewelry. We also ask that everyone removes false nails or chipped nail polish.

Second, there are 3 steps to follow before entering the NICU to be with your baby. Your visitors should follow these too.

1. **Wash your hands at the sink.** Remove jackets and roll sleeves above elbows. Wet hands. Apply soap (1-2 pumps is enough). Wash hands and wrists for 20 seconds. Sing "Happy Birthday" to mark the time. Rinse hands well.
2. **Sanitize your hands.** Apply alcohol hand sanitizer to palm of one hand and rub over palms and backs of hands and wrists. Do not rinse off sanitizer. Rub until hands are dry.
3. **Use hand sanitizer before AND after you touch your baby.** Once you've entered your baby's room, you can use sanitizer to maintain hand cleanliness. If you change a diaper or notice any visible dirt or matter on your hands, wash your hands at the sink.

NICU Rituals & Chaplaincy Support

For the past few months, we were lucky enough to have Chaplain Eric Schultz in our unit offering support to families and staff. Eric has ended his term here, but he gave us a wonderful gift: a naming ritual parents can use while in the NICU. Thank you, Eric!

This ritual is not necessarily religious in nature, and could be done by parents alone. Parents can also request a chaplain's participation by talking to a social worker or by calling 416.480.4244. Chaplains are wonderful sources of support and can also help families with baptisms and other rituals/celebrations.

Naming Ritual

Family member, chaplain or staff member may say,
***We gather today to bless a child,
A new life that has become part of our world.
We gather today to name this child.
To call a thing by name is to give it power,
and so today we shall give this child a gift.
We will welcome him/her into our hearts and lives
and bless her/him with a name of her/his own.***

The parents may say.

***To be a parent is to love and nurture,
to lead a child to be a good person.
It is to guide them along the right path
and to both teach them and learn from them.
It is to rein them in, and to give them wings.
It is to smile at their joy, and weep at their pain.
It is to walk beside them,
and then one day allow them to walk alone.
To be a parent is a great gift we have given
ourselves.
and the greatest responsibility we shall ever have.***

Parent(s) may indicate the reason for the name (*if there is family heritage, special meaning, etc.*)

***We recall that whatever is called into being we know
and remember through naming.
In recognition of the place that this child holds in this
family and in our hearts, we now name him/her
 (name) .***

ALL: Speaking to the baby

***We will call you by name in order that you will
recognize your name and instinctively know how
much we love you.***



Photo credit:
Ricardo/zone41.net

Milk & Cookies, every Monday

When: Every Monday from 1-2

Where: in the Family Lounge

What: You are invited to an informal family information session designed to address your questions and concerns about life in the NICU and beyond.

Come have a cookie and find out what all the excitement is

about. If you have questions, ask to speak to our Lactation Consultant.

Upcoming topics include: choosing car seats, safe travel tips, what eye exams do and what they mean, exercises for your baby, and myth-busting about milk-making.

Talk and treats, every Thursday

*"I remain in touch with many of the mothers and consider their friendships very special. We formed a bond unique to parents who have had babies in the NICU. These friendships and the informal support they give will continue as we parent our preemies through any challenges they may face."
- Sandy, mom of 27 week twin girls*

Sometimes the best people to talk to during a difficult time are people who are in the same boat. Our graduate families tell us they found the support of other NICU families invaluable while they were in the hospital.

And so every Thursday from 1:30 to 3:30 we host a family get-together in the family room. Sometimes we invite special guests who can answer your questions about the NICU, and sometimes we parents sit and chat amongst ourselves.

You are always welcome and please let your family members know they're welcome to drop by too (if they're healthy). One session we had 5 moms, 3 dads, one uncle and one grandma! We ate lots of cookies that day.

Mother's Day & Father's Day

For those families who are here in May and June, you will be marking some very special days with us! We hold our events on the Thursday before or the Tuesday after because we don't want to interfere with any plans you may have made with your family.

And so on Thursday, May 10, we will have an afternoon for all

mothers and grandmothers. We'll have treats and crafts.

On Tuesday, June 19, our Pizza Night will become a special Father's Day celebration, with some fun surprises for dads and grandpas.



Taking care of yourself: Tips from other NICU parents

We posted a request on our Facebook group for self-care tips, because we know how easy it is to put all your focus on your baby or babies and forget about yourself. Our graduate parents had a lot of good advice to share!

“Take care of your diet!! I know when we were in the NICU we were constantly eating out but it was so hard to prepare healthy meals. I think this is a must.”

“I took a day off each week; that’s when I got laundry, paperwork, etc. done. I would call in the morning and as long as everything was OK I’d stay home. It was worth it, since as they get closer to going home you’re there all the time

and can’t get anything done.”

“When people ask what they can do, be honest. I need a meal prepared, could you walk the dog, feel like doing a load of laundry? Give up control and let people help.”

“I found that journaling really helped me, I would bring it with me to write in during the quiet moments, and did so at home as well.”

“I used alone time to get a few things done and/or would just try to be “normal” like read a book or watch a tv show.”

“It is so very important

to watch your diet during this time to keep yourself going. For those mummies who are breastfeeding or pumping, spend a little time doing things that perk you up, like putting on some lip gloss or mascara.”

“Don’t be a hero. Stay on top of your pain meds, rest when you can, don’t lift stuff if you’ve had a C-section. You’ll be pumping at night which is tiring, so give yourself a break in any other way you can.”

“When I was on bedrest, I always felt better when I got myself to the shower, blow dried my hair, and put some clothes on! Gives you a much

better outlook, and keeps things feeling relatively normal even in a scary or stressful situation!”

“Take a good solid break every day. Sunnybrook is on a beautiful piece of land with expansive trails and a park. Go for a walk - remember, endorphins make you happy.”

“Watching Y&R in the family room. Getting outside for at least an hour a day. Sleeping at home if possible instead of hospital. Going to the parent groups. Avoiding alcohol. Crying lots. Weekly carb treat from Second Cup! Talking to other preemie parents. Sharing your feelings with your husband or partner.”

The importance of tummy time

By the time babies go home, they have made an important transition to sleeping on their backs. The “back to sleep” campaign has caused a significant reduction in SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) cases, which is great news.

Because babies spend so much time on their backs sleeping, it becomes important for them to spend time while awake on their tummies ... and this is even more important for preemies. If they don’t spend lots of time on their tummies, they’ll run into problems learning new skills like sitting,

crawling or pulling to stand.

If you’d like to learn more about tummy time, you can ask to meet with our pediatric physio-therapist. She can show you exercises and give you tips on how and when to do tummy time with your baby.

Generally speaking most babies can start doing tummy time at every diaper change at around 35 weeks, but it’s best to talk to your nurse or to the therapist before starting. We have also done a video, available on the Sunnybrook Media YouTube channel, that shows you exactly what to do.



A still from our instructional video starring one of our NICU graduates.



Pedal4Preemies with the Linden Fund

Here's a message from our friends at the Linden Fund about their upcoming charity event, Pedal4Preemies.

The Linden Fund is proud to invite you to join our fifth annual Pedal for Preemies Walk/Run Bike-a-thon on Saturday, May 26th, 2012. Join with

us for our 5th Annual event to Make a Big difference in Tiny Lives. You will have the opportunity to stroll, walk or run your way through Centennial Park in Etobicoke.

Choose either 1K, 5K or challenge yourself to a 10K run or walk with your children on bikes,

in strollers or wagons. Along your way you will enjoy the company of other individuals who have been directly or indirectly affected by prematurity as well as health care professionals and other like-minded supporters.

Find out more at www.pedal4preemies.com

So what can I eat around here?

As you many have noticed, the cafeteria in M Wing, 1st Floor has been closed for renovations, which should be done by the end of May. The hours of other food operations have been lengthened and some temporary services will be added.

- Second Cup will remain open 24/7 with additional food options
- E Wing Harlequin's: 7 am - 7 pm, 7 days a week
- H Wing daily lunch special: 11 am - 2 pm, Monday - Friday

- MG coffee cart: 8am - 4pm, Monday - Friday with additional food options

We have also put some snack items in the Family Room. They are in the cupboard next to the dishes on the second shelf, and have been identified with a sign. There are granola bars, popcorn bags, individual soups and oatmeal packets. Please help yourselves to these items, and please let Kate (the parent coordinator) know if there are other things you would like

or if we're running low. These items are for NICU families only.

Other food items in the kitchen that are not identified as shared items belong to other NICU families, so please don't use them.

The Hot Dog vendor is back for another season. The cart is located outside of the entrance of K Wing. Hours of operation are from 11am to 3pm, Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays.

There is also a Sunny's in the Veteran's Centre (K Wing, ground floor) Hours: Monday - Friday 7am to 4pm, Saturday - Sunday. 9am to 4pm.

Druxy's is in the Odette Cancer Centre, T Wing, Ground Floor. Hours: 6:30am to 6:30pm. Closed weekends & holidays.

A note for parents:

Once you've been discharged or transferred from Sunnybrook, we can only hold frozen milk for a short period of time. Please call the Dairy Queen to make arrangements to pick up frozen milk. Their number is 416-480-6100 x87948

What to buy for baby?

Parents are always asking, "What does our baby need?" The quick answer is: you. But that doesn't help much if you have friends and family asking what gifts they can give or what you need for your nursery. So here are a few suggestions. If you have any questions about things either on this list or not on this list, talk to your nurse or ask to speak to Maureen or Pat, two members of our Follow-up Clinic team.

NEED:

A crib or bassinet. Experts say that the best place for baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in a crib or bassinet in the parent's room.

A mobile. Look for one with bright contrasting colours and with something interesting for baby to look at.

A baby carrier. Something like a CuddlyWrap or Monkey Wrap works well; the Ergo carrier has been a big hit with many NICU families. Do NOT use a sling style carrier. These are dangerous for preemies.

Books. You don't need to wait until you go home to start reading to your baby. Research shows hearing parental voices helps NICU babies with brain development.

A regular baby monitor. You don't need ones with sensor mats; they often give false alarms and cause unnecessary stress.

A Bumbo seat. This is more of a "nice to have" and is a great item to purchase second-hand or to ask for as a gift. Your baby won't be ready for this right away, but after a few months, once s/he has good head control, it's a great tool for babies and helps them develop core strength. Ask at Follow-up Clinic about when your baby can start using it.

Foam mats. These puzzle mats are great for spreading out on the floor for tummy time.

Infant seat: A "bouncy" seat gives you a safe place to put baby for short periods of time while you do things for yourself.

Unscented baby soap or shampoo. If the soap has any fragrance, it can cause itchiness.

Sleep sack. This is a safe alternative to baby quilts or blankets.

DON'T NEED

Lots of preemie clothes. Your little ones will grow out of them before you know it. Ask friends for baby clothes in bigger sizes.

An exercise ring. These saucer-shaped devices, with a seat in the middle and toys placed around a ring, aren't good for preemies. They discourage good muscle development.

A jumping harness. These devices, which usually hang from door frames and encourage babies to jump, look like a lot of fun. Unfortunately they cause many problems for babies, especially preemies.

Crib "quilt sets" including bumper pads. You only need a tight-fitting mattress cover. Loose bedding in a crib is dangerous.

A note on secondhand goods: Buying secondhand or taking hand-me-downs can save a lot of money. You do need to be careful about car seats and cribs, since safety standards change. For more information about car seats, ask to speak to Gopi Nathan, who does all the car seat probes in the NICU.

"Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths."

— Etty Hillesum

We need to hear from you!

We are always trying to improve our quality of care for babies and for families. Some of our most valuable changes have come about because of feedback from our families, and we are always grateful for our input.

We have set up a comments box in the Family Room where you can leave questions, comments or compliments. They are collected each week.

If you have an issue that needs to be addressed immediately, it's best to talk to a person directly. You can talk to your nurse, the charge nurse, the Patient Care Manager or the Parent Coordinator.

We would also love it if you would fill out the How's Your Baby survey found at www.howsyourbaby.com.

Our code is VON001. This

survey is a very useful tool for us and helps us focus on areas that need improvement.

You may also be contacted after discharge or transfer for survey purposes. It's never too late to send us feedback; sometimes families get back in touch after a year or more with really helpful comments. We are always grateful.

Preemie Picnic: JUNE 24

The bouncy castles? BOOKED. The fire truck? DONE. The facepainters? YUP. Looks like it's almost time for the Preemie Picnic!

Every year, graduate families and staff members gather together to celebrate our wonderful children. For families, it's a chance to see other parents and staff members again, and show off some wonderful kids. For staff, it's a chance to see what these little bundles look like years later. And for the kids? Well, it's a chance to have a picnic, make new

friends, enjoy yourself and get your face painted.

This year's picnic will be from 12 to 4 pm on Sunday, June 24, in McLean House Park which is close by Sunnybrook. For updates, visit the Sunnybrook NICU Families group on Facebook, or email Kate.Robson@sunnybrook.ca.

We provide food and fun stuff to do; we ask you to bring picnic blankets or lawn chairs if you like to sit. Hope to see you there!



What is Family Centred Care?

Sunnybrook NICU

Central Desk Phone:
416-480-6055
Location: M Wing,
4th Floor, Bayview Campus

Newsletter Editor and
Parent Coordinator:
Kate Robson

Kate.Robson@sunnybrook.ca

The model of care offered in the NICU at Sunnybrook is known as "Patient and Family Centred Care" (or P&FCC). It means that you and your baby/babies are at the centre of the circle of care. Families are a key part of the care team and should always be treated as

such. That is why NICU staff members make a point of telling families you are not visitors – you have a right to be here.

The core concepts of P&FCC are:

- Respect and Dignity
- Information Sharing
- Participation
- Collaboration

We want you to be a part of the team, and we will help you in whatever way we can.

To learn more about Patient and Family Centred Care, visit the Institute for Patient and Family-Centred Care at <http://ipfcc.org>.