

# Guideline for parents and visitors on the Neonatal Unit (NNU)

## Introduction

NNU endeavours to provide an environment that is safe, professional and friendly. Staff, parents and visitors are asked to:

- ensure the health and safety of all patients
- promote developmental care
- treat all people with dignity, courtesy and respect
- respect the privacy of others and keep in confidence any information gained about them
- not accept or display behaviour or language that may be offensive
- respect visiting hours and be mindful of quiet times
- respect the property of Royal Children's Hospital
- honour the non-smoking policy

## Aim

The aim of this guideline is to ensure consistent information is provided by staff members to parents and visitors who are visiting NNU.

## Definition of Terms

**NICU** – Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

**SCN** – Special Care Nursery

**Developmental Care** – Interventions that support the behavioural organisation of each individual baby. Developmental care endeavours to enhance physiological stability, and promote sleep patterns, growth and maturation. This can include removing noxious stimuli and ensuring cue based care. Education and involvement of parents is critical to the baby's emotional, social and physical wellbeing and is a crucial part of family centred developmental care.

**SIDS** – Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

**Infection Control** – The prevention and monitoring of hospital acquired infections by education, surveillance and development of relevant policies and procedures.

**H&S** – Health and Safety

**Privacy and Confidentiality** – Privacy is the right of individuals to keep information about them from being disclosed. Confidentiality is how nurses or parents take care of private information once it has been disclosed.

## Visiting

7 days a week 8am-12pm and 2pm-8pm  
Parents are welcome to visit anytime, 7 days a week

Family and visitors who are unwell with an infection, cold or flu or have come into contact with an infectious disease should consult with the bedside nurse or nurse in charge by telephone before coming into NNU.

Siblings, who are well, may visit at any time, however parents are asked to maintain responsibility for their children at all times. The Starlight Room is a place for siblings to have some time away from NNU and to give parents some time with just their new baby.

For infection control reasons, children under the age of 12 who are **not** siblings are not permitted to visit NNU.

Visitors are limited to three at a time – one of whom should be a parent. If parents are happy to have other people visit without them present, they should advise the bedside nurse, who will record the visitors' names on the Nursing Admission form.

Parents and visitors of each baby should stay at their own baby's bedside, and not wander around the room.

## Quiet Time

Quiet Time hours are from 12pm-2pm everyday. The lights are dimmed (in SCN) and noise is kept to a minimum to allow babies a rest period and to aid developmental care.

Parents are welcome to sit with their baby, but are asked to make sure visitors know not to come during these hours.

## Infection Control, Health and Safety

### Cots/Isolettes

The cot sides of the bed/isolette need to remain up at all times when parents/nurses are away from the bedside for the babies' safety. If parents are unsure how to do this, the nurse looking after their baby will be able to help.

### Toys

It is against SIDS recommendations to have toys and other objects in babies' beds while they are sleeping. Additionally it has been identified that there is an increase in microorganisms grown on toys stored in cots. Toys should be used by parents or staff for interaction with babies when they are awake and need "play time". Toys should otherwise be stored on the bench seats or shelves around the babies' cots.

### Parents' Interaction with their Baby

Even though babies are in hospital there are things parents can do to aid in the care of their baby and to help create a bond. These things include bathing their baby, nappy changes, taking their baby's temperature, kangaroo care and play time. Parents can speak with their baby's bedside nurse or care manager if they can't always visit, and a time can be arranged that is suitable for parents to have these special moments with their baby. Parents are encouraged to play with their baby while they are awake (if the baby is well enough). There are play therapists and music therapists who provide developmentally appropriate interaction to babies on NNU. Parents are encouraged to ask their baby's bedside nurse to contact one of them if appropriate.

### Food and Drink on NNU

Staff, parents and other visitors are asked to refrain from taking food or hot drinks into the nursery for infection control and safety reasons. Cold drinks are allowed in the rooms.

### Hand Washing

It is essential for all people entering the rooms to wash their hands or use the Microshield hand-gel to prevent germs or infections being passed around. It is necessary to wash or gel **before** and **after** touching a baby, **before** and **after** a nappy change, when entering or leaving the room, after going to the bathroom etc. Microshield hand-gel is an excellent way to rid hands of germs, however if hands are visibly dirty, they must be washed with soap and water. All staff, parents and visitors should feel free to remind or prompt anyone to use the hand-gel.

### Balloons

Balloons contain latex, which can cause allergy and are also an infection control hazard as they collect dust which can be harmful for the babies, and therefore are not permitted on NNU.

### Flowers

Flowers are also an infection control hazard and can be harmful for the babies and therefore are not permitted on NNU.

### Surgical Procedures

Operations will sometimes be performed in the babies' rooms. Parents and visitors for **all** patients in the room will be asked to leave, and will be advised when it is appropriate to return. This is for the babies' and staff health and safety, and infection control reasons.

### Mobile Phones and Electrical Equipment

Mobile phones are not to be used while on NNU and must be switched off at all times as they can interfere with medical equipment. They may however, be used in the parent retreat or in the area near lifts.

Electrical equipment such as computers can interfere with monitoring equipment, so such equipment should not be used on NNU. Phones and computers may be used in the parent retreat. Electrical equipment must first be checked by an RCH technician.

### Parents Sleeping

Under **no** circumstances are parents or visitors allowed to sleep at the bedside or in the parent retreat. This is for the safety of the babies, staff, parents and visitors.

### Monitoring

If and when it is appropriate for a baby to have time disconnected from the monitoring equipment, parents are encouraged to ask the nurse looking after their baby to disconnect the monitoring device. It is very dangerous for parents to do this without the nurse's knowledge. If a baby's monitor is alarming, parents are asked not to silence the alarm. It is important for the nurse to see the monitor and assess the baby.

### Access to NNU

For safety reasons parents are not to press the door release button to allow people in through the main doors. This is a responsibility of the ward clerk or other staff members.

### Parent Retreat

NNU offers a parent retreat for the immediate family of the babies on the unit. Because there are a large number of babies on NNU at any one time, the retreat is only for parents and siblings. The Royal Children's Hospital has the Starlight Room, a Family Resource Centre, two cafes and an outdoor play area for children. As mentioned, parents are asked not to sleep in the retreat.

### Smoking and Alcohol Consumption

Smoking and the consumption of alcohol are not permitted any where within NNU or parent retreat.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

#### Medical Ward Rounds

These occur twice a day on weekdays (8:30am-10:30am and 4:30pm-6pm) and once in the morning on the weekend. Parents are encouraged to be present for discussion regarding their own baby however they will be asked to leave the room when the other babies are discussed.

#### Information

For privacy and confidentiality, information will only be given to the babies' parents.