Orientation to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
If there are days you cannot come and see your baby, we encourage you to call to get updates.
CARETAKING AND VISITING

- Parents wearing a band are welcome at any time, 24 hours a day.
  - If you arrive past 8:30 pm you will enter through the emergency department and need to show security a valid government ID such as a driver’s license, to come to the NICU.
- Only two adults can be at the bedside at one time, one of the adults must be wearing a band.
- The baby’s brother or sister can visit if:
  - They are 3 years of age.
  - Provide an up to date immunization record to the front desk.
  - Have not been exposed to infectious diseases.
  - The number of siblings and duration of the visit are at the nurse’s discretion.
- Your baby may move bed spaces during their stay in the NICU to ensure they have a proper nursing assignment, as your baby’s condition improves and medical needs are lessened, or to clean.
NICU NURSING

- Your baby is cared for by a nurse 24 hours a day. A Neonatal Nurse has special training to care for premature or sick newborns. Each nurse is assigned several babies to care for; each nurse typically works 8 or 12 hour shifts.
- Nurses hand off care to one another at 7am, 3pm, 7pm and 11pm.
- You are encouraged to take part in the shift change communication at those times.
OTHER IMPORTANT TEAM MEMBERS

- There are many highly skilled personnel that are part of your baby’s care team including:
  - **Attending Neonatologist**: The leader of the NICU Team. These are pediatricians who have special training in the care of premature and sick newborn babies.
  - **Fellow**: A doctor who has completed residency in pediatrics and is taking advanced training to become a neonatologist.
  - **Resident**: Doctors who are training in pediatric care.
  - **Social Worker**: A healthcare professional who is trained to counsel and support families and who can assist you with healthcare arrangements, financial matters and involvement with other agencies.
  - **Respiratory Therapists**: A healthcare professional who is responsible for the equipment and care that helps a baby breathe.
  - **Developmental Specialist/Therapists**: Healthcare professionals who are monitoring your child’s growth and development and will make recommendations on caring for your infant to promote growth.
  - **Lactation Consultants**: A person with special training in breastfeeding to assist families in meeting their breastfeeding goals.
Medical Rounds

Each weekday at the beginning of the day, the residents evaluate the babies progress over the last 24 hours, and then midmorning at the “Medical Rounds” with the attending neonatologist all the physicians discuss the patients and make plans for the next day or several days.

- You are encouraged to actively participate in these rounds if you are in the NICU.
- You are a vital part of your infant’s care team. Your observations are important to share with the team.
- The physician team can help you understand the medical plan and answer any questions you may have.
INFECTION CONTROL

- The staff at the receptionist desk will show you how to properly wash your hands.
- While spending time with your baby, clean your hands after touching personal items (like your cell phone) by using alcohol gel sanitizer at the bedside.
- Before and after you feed your baby or change the baby’s diaper, you will wash your hands again.
- Long natural/artificial fingernails trap germs that could be transferred to your baby. They are nearly impossible to remove by hand washing. You may want to consider trimming your nails short or removing artificial nails.

No eating or drinking at the bedside.

We want to empower you to speak up if you see that the professionals are not washing their hands. This is a team effort.

Premature and sick babies have underdeveloped immune systems and cannot fight off infections as well as an adult. Visitors may not have any of the following signs of illness:

- Fever within the last 4 days
- Diarrhea
- Drainage from the eye or “pink eye”
- Skin sores or open wounds.
- Colds or respiratory illness
- Flu-like symptoms
- Siblings who have been in contact with another child who had a rash within the last 3 weeks
DEVELOPMENTAL CARE AND BONDING

- Typically, the babies are cared for on schedules based on feedings, which are usually every 3 to 4 hours. Babies are encouraged to rest in between times depending on their age and condition.
- Parental involvement is absolutely essential for the babies well being and parents can still do a lot even when the infant is critical.
- The nurse or developmental therapist will help you find ways to be involved with the care of your baby.
- Very fragile babies may be handled less frequently; older babies may be encouraged to have “play” times.
- If your baby cannot be held, hand hugs can be done by placing your hands around his or her head and butt and providing nice firm boundaries. You can whisper to your baby and even offer a cloth or blanket that smells like you to be placed in the bed along side them.
- Kangaroo Care (Skin to skin holding) is a great way to care for your baby. Holding this way is done when the baby is unclothed and placed on the bare skin of the mother or father. Benefits for preterm and special care babies include:
  - Babies are warmer
  - Babies are calmer
  - Heart and breathing rates are normalized
  - Milk supply is improved
PUMPING AND BREASTFEEDING

• We have a private room for pumping or a pump and privacy screen can be brought to the bedside.
• Pumping and breastfeeding moms can request a meal tray when they are here during meals times.
• We will provide all the milk storage devices needed while baby is with us.
• We will provide advice and practical support for breastfeeding.
• The Lactation Consultant’s office is in room 4304.
• Parking: Wood between Roosevelt and Taylor.
• Discount parking is available. Please call Guest Relations at 312-996-3610.
• Dining: The Java Café is open 24 hours.
• Garden Café, first floor. Hours:
  o 6:30am-10am (breakfast)
  o 11am-2pm (lunch)
  o 4pm-7pm (dinner)
  o Holidays 6:30am-2pm

*The NICU can order 1 free meal per day for Pumping/Breastfeeding moms.
Whether planned or unplanned, having a baby in the NICU can be very stressful, we are here to work with you to provide the best possible care for your baby. Families are essential partners in the effort to improve the quality and safety of health care. Your participation as active members of the health care team is an essential part of making your baby’s care the best it can be. You are the most important part of your baby’s care team! In order to support you fully, we want you to know the policies and resources available to you in the NICU. Therefore, you will be asked to read your Patient & Family Handbook as well as sign the Parent Partnership Agreement early on in your baby’s stay to help you along the way.
CONGRATULATIONS ON THE BIRTH OF YOUR BABY.
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU, AT ANY POINT, ALONG THE WAY.