



# NICUPS INKUBATOR

NOVEMBER 2008

Hotline: 314.251.6636

www.miraclebaby.org

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WHO ARE  
THE  
NICUPS?



*Since 1991, the NICUPS' purpose has been to support and empower new parents in the NICU to be the strongest advocates for their children. Drawing upon our own experiences as graduate NICU parents, we offer hope, compassion, love and encouragement to each family, while respecting the dignity of all families in crisis.*

## NICU Super Star Sibling Party

Saturday, November 1st

- 1-2 p.m.
- 6th Floor Classroom #3
- All Ages Welcome
- A Great Time for both Parents to visit their Baby Together or have a little quiet time
- sign-up in NICU North

### NOVEMBER CALENDAR

What	Description	When	Where
NICU Parent Orientation Class	Let us help you orientate yourself to the NICU and to parenting in the NICU. NICU Parent Orientation followed by: DVD presentation Free March of Dimes NICU Baby Journals	Wednesday 11/12 & 11/26 7-8:30 p.m.	"New" NICU South—2nd Floor
Guest Speakers	11/7 –Kelly Burch, NICU Pharmacist 11/21 –Pam Pinter, Lactation Consultant	Friday 11/7 & 11/21, @10am	"New" NICU South - 2nd Floor
Unit Visit by a NICUP	A NICUP volunteer will visit the unit to visit with parents and families.	Wednesday 11/5 & 11/26	NICU North NICU South
Basic Premie Development Class	Would you like to learn more about your baby's developing sensory system, understanding your baby's cues and how to react to them? This class is recommended for parents whose babies are 32 weeks adjusted age.	11/5 @ 1:30pm & 11/19@1:30pm	Please contact Barb Baer in the OT office to sign up for the class by calling 251-6286.
Super Star Sibling Party	The Super Star Sibling Party is an opportunity for siblings of babies in the SJMMC NICU to learn more about their little sister or brother.	Saturday November 1st 1-2 pm	6th Floor#3 To sign-up call 251-6222 or at NICU North

**Thanksgiving dinners take eighteen hours to prepare. They are consumed in twelve minutes. Half-times take twelve minutes. This is not coincidence.**

**~Erma Bombeck**



*There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as if everything is.*

*-Albert Einstein (fellow preemie)*



## Flu Shots and FluMist Help Protect Your Family Against Influenza

“EVERYONE who is in contact with a premature baby...parents, grandparents, siblings, sitters...should receive immunization of one kind or the other against influenza. “- Kelly Burch, NICU Pharmacist

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease that affects 5% to 20% of the U.S. population each year, leading to over 200,000 hospitalizations and an average of 36,000 deaths (mostly in the elderly).

The flu can cause your child to develop medical problems, including lower respiratory illnesses, such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and ear infections. Some of these problems can make your child sick enough to need medical attention at a doctor's office or hospital.

“**Flu shots**” are recommended for families who are welcoming a new baby into the home. Babies are too young to get a flu shot, but protecting all the people in the family protects the baby. People need a new flu shot every year. Flu shots are widely available in the fall, and can be obtained at doctor's offices and pharmacies throughout the winter months. St. John's Mercy Medical Center offers shots on Mondays and Fridays at a cost of \$30. For more information call the Flu Hotline (314) 251-7444.

Flu Shots and FluMist both protect against influenza. Flu shots are labeled for infants as young as 6 months old, and all adults. FluMist is a live weakened influenza virus vaccine approved for the prevention of certain types of influenza disease in children, adolescents and adults 2-49 years of age. FluMist is not for everyone. Always check with your doctor if you have concerns. FluMist is **NOT** recommended **for anyone with a baby in the NICU** or for people with asthma. Our infection control experts recommend 7 days between immunization with FluMist and visiting the NICU. Premature neonates are immunosuppressed, and might respond poorly even to the weakened virus that is present in FluMist. We think that by the time babies are sturdy enough to go home, its no longer a problem, but while they, and their neighbors, are in the hospital, there may be a tiny risk, which we minimize by **asking people to avoid immunization with FluMist.**

**In addition to getting your yearly flu shot, help protect your baby by practicing good old fashioned HAND WASHING!**

Sources: Kelly Burch, NICU Pharmacist, and MedImmune

## A Top Ten List of Things that YOU can do for a NICU Parent

"I have absolutely no idea what to say to you."

There is a lot that friends and family can say and do for someone they know that has a baby in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Our society has not worked out how to deal with the premie phenomena yet. The advice below may seem contradictory - that means you have to be careful to tune in to how things are going for the new parents before you follow any of it. Different people react in different ways, and every parent and every baby is different. Still, here are some pointers from our group's experience that may be useful.

1. Be sensitive to the emotional strain that the premature birth is placing on the premie parents. Try not to do anything to make things harder for them.
2. The baby or babies may be very sick, so being too congratulatory can be unhelpful. Acknowledge what the parents are going through and their fears for their baby.
3. On the other hand, many parents in our group report that the lack of recognition of the new baby by friends and family was distressing. Even when the baby's outcome is uncertain, parents appreciate gifts such as baby clothes and toys because they recognize the baby.
4. If the parents have other children, do all you can to look after these children, entertain them if that's what they want, comfort them if they are anxious, provide a stress-free haven for them if you can.
5. If you send cards or flowers, be thoughtful. Some flowers look like they belong at a funeral. Cards with pictures of plump full term babies can cause distress. Stock messages are often inappropriate. Blank cards on which you write your own message, poem, something from your heart, will probably be much more appropriate.
6. Be careful not to place expectations or any sort of load on the new parents - they have a great deal to grapple with, and they may not have the time or the energy even to talk to anyone for a while. Understand if they don't call back. They will still be comforted to know that you are thinking of them.
7. If there are any practical things that you can think of which might help the parents, then do them, in the lowest key, most sensitive manner you can manage. If you can mow the lawns, look after pets, clean the house and leave flowers or a prepared meal, it will always be appreciated.
8. Food is a wonderful comforter, and premie parents need all the comforting they can get. Things like supermarket shopping can be unbearable for parents trying to cope with a baby in precarious health.
9. Find out if its okay to visit, or how the parents want to manage visitors, and follow their wishes. If you are a close family member, you can volunteer to keep family and friends updated on the baby's health so that the parents don't have to deal with so many people.
10. Be there for them. Don't keep away because its hard. Try to stay the distance too - some premies are in hospital for many months and support from friends and family often drops off over time while the parents are becoming increasingly exhausted with the hospital routine. Often the need for support increases as time goes on.

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Neonatal Intensive Care Unit  
Parent Support



# Letters from Santa

The St. John's Mercy NICUPS (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Parents) are helping Santa with his mail this year! Just give us a bit of information and Santa will send a personalized letter to the children (young and old) in your life!

The NICUPS are a group of graduate parents from the St. John's Mercy Medical Center Neonatal Intensive Care Unit who provide support for families of babies in the NICU. Thanks to donations from supporters like you, we are able to provide assistance to these families—from disposable cameras and gas cards, to one-on-one talks and weekly parent support group meetings.

By ordering your personalized Letter from Santa, you can help us make a difference in the lives of families with premature and critically ill newborns.

You can order your personalized Letter from Santa online at [www.miraclebaby.org](http://www.miraclebaby.org). Donations are accepted online through St. John's Mercy's secure payment processing. The website is our preferred method. Deadline for online orders is December 12. Letters will be mailed between December 16 & 18.

Letters can also be ordered by completing the form below and returning it, with your donation postmarked by December 10. You can contact us with questions at [lettersfromsanta@hotmail.com](mailto:lettersfromsanta@hotmail.com) or by calling (314) 251-6636.

Please share this with friends, family and co-workers who may want their own Letter from Santa. Remember, these letters aren't just for kids! It's a great way to remind friends and family that Santa is watching!

Thank you,  
Santa's Helpers

Please retain this portion for your records

Please complete the information below and return by December 10 with donation to:

St. John's Mercy Medical Center; Attn: NICU Santa Letter; P.O. Box 411702; St. Louis, MO 63141  
A minimum donation of \$6 per letter is requested. Make checks payable to: NICUPS.

Name of child (first and last): \_\_\_\_\_

Boy \_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_ Age \_\_\_

Special accomplishments at home or school: \_\_\_\_\_

One thing child needs to work on at home (ex. cleaning room) \_\_\_\_\_

Santa will receive updates from person ordering letter: Mom \_\_\_ Dad \_\_\_ Other (name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address of child: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of siblings, family members or pets that live with child: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum of 3 names. For additional letters, please write information on separate piece of paper.

Donation per letter  \$6  \$10  \$25  other \_\_\_\_\_