



Family Integrated Care

The early birth of a baby can be stressful and confusing. Your sudden move to life in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) may be overwhelming. Babies enter the NICU at Mount Sinai because of the need for special care.

Our approach to caring for your baby is based on the family-centered care model. This means that we understand that families who have a baby in the NICU face new issues, emotions and circumstances. All members of our team are concerned with the well-being of your family, in addition to the well-being of your baby.



Griffin Williams

Born at 29 weeks, 1450 grams

Griffin Williams

4 months



Your presence and participation in the care of your baby is very important.

The goal of **Family Integrated Care** is to help you form close bonds with your baby and leave the NICU sooner.

Nurses understand the unique needs of infants in the NICU and can teach parents to understand and help their babies. As parents learn, they feel more confident in caring. The babies teach us all.

We hope that by the time you transfer to another hospital, or discharge home, you will feel more secure taking care of and understanding the needs of your infant.

We can all teach, learn and care together.

Family Integrated Care At A Glance

Once your baby is stable, we believe that parents can become more involved in their infant's care, assisted by staff when necessary. For over 30 years, this model has worked at the West-Tallinn Children's Hospital in Estonia with very positive results. In March 2010, a healthcare team from Mount Sinai, SickKids and Sunnybrook Hospitals, went on a site visit to Estonia to observe their successful "care-by-parent" practice. The Mount Sinai Hospital team was pleased by what they saw and made a commitment to trial this model of care.

A committee was formed to create a similar project in Toronto led by Dr. Shoo Lee, Paediatrician-in-Chief and Neonatologist at Mount Sinai Hospital. An enthusiastic team of doctors, nurses, researchers and graduate NICU parents set up a pilot project with interested parents who wished to provide extra care to their baby.

Over 40 families participated in the pilot project and the outcomes were very positive.

The Small Family

With NICU graduate, Rory (950 grams), born at 26 weeks



Time Commitment

You must be willing to commit to spending at least 8 hours a day at the NICU (before 8pm). We would like you to attend medical rounds, which usually will be in the morning. The program will work best for you if you are here during the day, because most of the support services are available during the day.

Infant Care

We will ask you to do basic baby care and hold your baby skin-to-skin as much as possible. The nurse-to-patient ratio has not changed for this study; you will always have a bedside nurse to help you.

You will be asked to do basic charting to keep track of your baby's progress while in the NICU. You will be taught how to keep records and can ask for help whenever you need it.

The medical team - especially nurses - will act as coaches to assist you in taking over the care of your baby. In time, you will be expected to provide all components of your baby's care when you are at the hospital.

Education Sessions

Small group parent education sessions are held daily at 2:00pm. Topics may include:

- Coping with your baby's hospitalization: survival tactics for parents
- Parents & the multidisciplinary team: Partners in the care of your baby
- Growth and development of your preterm baby
- Medical aspects of prematurity
- Feeding your baby
- Interacting with your preterm baby
- Experiences shared by graduate parents
- Planning for discharge: Taking your baby home
- A Midwife: All about you, the mother

You are also encouraged to participate in weekly *Babysteps to Breastfeeding* program meetings on Thursdays. We also offer Infant and Child CPR every 3 weeks, specifically designed for parents of premature babies. Both events take place in the 7th Floor Classroom.

Meet a family that participated in Family Integrated Care



*The Mazurkewich Family
Twins Isobel (1800 grams) and Elena
(1790 grams) were born at 32 weeks*

“ Our first week in the NICU left us feeling very frustrated and unsure of how to best help our premature twins. With the invitation to join this project came greater access to their charts and test results, and the training in how to interpret the information. Becoming part of their “care team” helped us create strong relationships - with Nurses, Doctors, Lactation Consultants - which helped us learn how to deal with both our babies’ unique challenges and the NICU/Level 2 environment. It was this amazing support network that helped us stay positive, feel more confident and do our best for our children. We are very grateful to everyone involved in this program. ”

PROJECT NEWS

We piloted this model of care for a year (April 2011-April 2012) and enrolled 46 infants (4 sets of twins). Many of the families really enjoyed the program, as did the nurses, and the babies appear to be doing better.

We still need to explore:

- Can we offer this program safely to more families at Mount Sinai Hospital?
- How many families can participate when offered this program?
- Can we support other hospitals to provide the same model of care at their sites?
- What sort of support do families and nurses need to make this work more widely?

Other parents said...

“ Looking back I know that my participation in the program helped my baby get better, but it also helped me cope with everything. It gave me lots of information that I would not have received otherwise. ”

“ There isn’t much about the NICU a parent can control, but this program gave me purpose. ”

To learn more about Family Integrated Care

Talk to your bedside nurse, social worker or the Parent Resource Nurse to learn more and participate!