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# Neonatal Program

## Parent Information:

# Flu and Your Baby

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms can be very mild to severe.

- Cough or stomach problems (nausea, vomiting and diarrhea) with fever plus
- Joint or muscle pain, extreme tiredness, weakness, headache, and sore throat and sometimes breathing problems.



### How is the flu spread?

The flu is spread on droplets when people with the flu cough and sneeze. The flu gets into your body through your nose, mouth, eyes and when you breathe. The flu virus can live on door handles, counters, and tissues and be picked up on your hands and spread when you touch your mouth or nose.

### How do you test for the flu?

A small amount of fluid will be collected from your baby's nose using a suction catheter and sent to the lab. This is called an NPW or "nasal pharyngeal washing". We will know within a few hours if your baby has the flu. It can take several days to know if your baby has the flu.

### Why did my baby get moved?

If we think your baby has the flu we will move your baby to a private room. Staff will need to wear a special mask, goggles, gown and gloves each time they enter your baby's room to prevent spreading the flu to other babies, families and staff. We will continue to provide your baby with the best care and treatment. If several babies have the flu we would move these babies into the same room. This is called "a cohort" room.

### Do parents need to wear gowns, masks and gloves?

Wearing a gown, mask and gloves will decrease your chances of catching the flu from your baby and passing it on to others. Some parents may choose not to wear protective clothing when spending time with their baby. We cannot stress enough the need for excellent hand washing and frequent use of gel hand cleanser to help prevent spreading the flu.

### How long will my baby stay in the private room?

Most babies with the flu will remain in a private room for 7 days from the time they have symptoms. This may vary from baby to baby and will be decided by Infection Control and the NICU Team.

## Parenting Time

### If I have flu symptoms can we still come to spend time with our baby?

- If you have flu symptoms please do not come into the nursery.
- Parents who have been treated with an antiviral medicine called Tamiflu® can return to the NICU after a full 48 hours of treatment if they are feeling better. Parents not treated with Tamiflu® must stay at home for 7 days from the beginning of the flu symptoms.
- If both parents get the flu, please arrange for a relative or friend to visit your baby until you are well. Please make sure that you add this person to your visitors list at the front desk.

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## My partner is feeling sick but I feel fine... Can I still come in to spend time with our baby?

Parents without symptoms are welcome to continue to spend time with their baby.

## Can brothers and sisters visit?

- We recommend that brothers and sisters do not visit while their baby is sick with the flu. This will help prevent your children from catching the flu from your baby.
- Once your baby is recovered and symptom-free brothers and sisters can visit as usual.
- Any brother or sister who has cold or flu symptoms must not visit. This includes sitting in the family lounge. Please do not bring sick children into the hospital unless you are bringing them for medical care.

## Visitors

Visitors with flu symptoms must not visit. During an outbreak of the flu in the community there will be no visitors in the NICU. This includes brothers and sisters.

## Expressed Breast Milk

All mothers can continue to provide breast milk for their baby with good hand washing and normal pumping methods. If you have flu symptoms, please arrange for someone to bring your breast milk in for your baby.

## Breastfeeding and Skin to Skin

If your baby has already been breastfeeding and skin to skin cuddling; this may continue if your baby has the flu but it will depend on your baby's condition.

## Things you can do to protect your baby and your family:



- Get vaccinated for the flu
- Stay home if you are sick.



- Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleanser.
- Wear a mask while in the NICU if you have not been vaccinated.

If you have any questions regarding your baby, please ask to speak to your baby's doctor.

For more information on the flu:



- Search for 'flu' at HealthLinkBC.ca <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile12b.stm>
- Visit ImmunizeBC.ca <http://www.immunizebc.ca/diseases-vaccinations/influenza> or



Call HealthLink BC by dialing 8-1-1 and speak to a nurse day or night.