

Infectious Diseases and visitors to the Newborn Service

Information for parents

Introduction

This information is to inform parents of the risk of infections from visitors to the newborn service.

The babies in the newborn service are already unwell and/or premature so it is very important to keep them safe from any infectious illness. We would like you to stop any one you know who is sick or unwell from visiting your baby. Anyone who has been in contact with somebody with an infectious disease should also stay away as they could pass the infection to the babies in the nursery, even if they do not feel sick themselves. Premature and sick babies are at greater risk than a healthy term baby, as they are less able to fight infection.

Which infectious diseases can cause problems?

Any infectious disease can make a baby sick. Communicable infections that can cause harm include coughs, colds, the flu, cold sores (herpes), respiratory viruses, diarrhoea (eg rotavirus), and chickenpox. Anyone with these infections should notify the Newborn unit to check if they should visit the unit.

What are the symptoms of an infectious disease?

Fever, feeling unwell and lacking in energy are common symptoms of most infectious diseases. With some infections a rash or sores can appear, eg. chickenpox or herpes. Gastrointestinal infections can cause vomiting or diarrhoea.

Inform staff of any contact with an infectious disease

Please tell newborn service staff if you or any member of your family has been in contact with someone who has an infectious disease, particularly chicken pox, even if you don't have symptoms at the time. It is very important that staff know about this so they can take appropriate action.

If you have other children

If you have other children please wait until they have recovered from any sickness or infections before allowing them to visit your new baby.

Sick children **cannot** be left in the National Women's sibling playroom because of the risk of passing on infection to others.

Chicken Pox

A virus such as chicken pox has an incubation period. This is the time between your contact with a person who has the virus and getting sick yourself. The usual incubation time between being exposed to a virus and getting sick is 10-21 days.

People become infectious from 1-2 days before the symptoms appear. Spots can appear on the scalp, face, body, arms and legs and inside the mouth. With chickenpox the spots will become blisters which form hard scabs.

Hospital Infection Control

Golden Rules

- Always wash your hands before touching or handling your baby (this rule is also for your visitors)
- Do not visit if you are sick, coughing or sneezing
- Do not visit if you have been in contact with someone who has an infectious disease
- Tell the staff if a family member, or someone you have been in contact with has an infectious disease
- Don't touch or handle the other babies in the newborn unit.

Further Information

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet or want more information about infectious diseases ask the nurse or doctor caring for your baby.

A range of health information is also available from the Women's Health Information Unit on Level 9 of Auckland City Hospital Mon-Fri 9am-7pm (ph 307-4949 ext 25678 or HIWS@adhb.govt.nz). In addition to written information the Unit provides access to computer research databases and the internet.

This leaflet provides a guide only. If you have concerns or want more information about your baby, ask the doctor or nurse providing your baby's care.