



NICU design

Facilitation of skin-to-skin care and parental involvement through the physical environment

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Statement of the standard

A physical environment that facilitates parent-infant closeness and skin-to-skin care is considered in NICU planning.



For parents and family

- Parents and family are informed by healthcare professionals about principles and purpose of the design to facilitate skin-to-skin care and are part of the planning process for NICU design.



For neonatal unit

- The design ensures that parents and infants are protected from unwanted sensory exposure (noise, light, smell).
- Facilities are available to ease transfer from incubator to skin-to-skin care and the use of simultaneous monitoring and respiratory support technologies to allow uninterrupted skin-to-skin care.
- Hospital beds, which result in longer periods of skin-to-skin care, and reclining chairs suitable for mothers that have recently given birth and that allow adjustments of position are available.



For health service

- A national guideline for the physical and architectural standards in the NICU including a primary user's perspective allowing close infant-parent contact throughout the 24 hours and entire hospital stay is available.

Benefits

Short-term benefits:

- Increased physical stability of the newborn infant
- Reduced mortality and infection rate
- Improved self-regulation and sleep
- Decreased newborn infant stress and pain
- Improved parental confidence
- Early parent-infant interaction
- Reduced length of parent-infant separation

Long-term benefits:

- Improved cognitive and neurodevelopmental outcome
- Improved and prolonged exclusive breastfeeding
- Improved speech development



For healthcare professionals

- Healthcare professionals are part of the design team.



For hospital

- Physical space and architectural standards in the design facilitate close infant-parent contact throughout the 24 hours, integrating a primary user's perspective and cover delivery room, transfer areas, and NICU.
- Over-night accommodation facilities for parents in or close to the ward with possibilities for having all meals in the hospital are provided.

