



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. Facilitation of skin-to-skin contact with parental and family involvement through the physical environment.



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:

- Reduced mortality and infection rate
- Increased physical stability of the newborn infant
- 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 preferable in or close to the unit with possibilities for having all meals in the hospital are provided.

