

## Six Essential Questions to Ask Today COVID-19 and NICU Visitation Rules

Without NICU-specific clinical recommendations or guidelines for healthy, asymptomatic parents with regard to parenting in the NICU during a pandemic, Hospitals around the country are independently adopting and enforcing an arbitrary and nuanced variety of policies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These changes take the form of unethical rules that ban parents from the NICU, and Restricted Visitation that reduces or eliminates the amount of time Parents can spend with their babies by dictating who, when, how often and for how long Parents are granted access to enter the NICU.

As states continue to reopen in phases, communities will likely experience subsequent waves of infection that may create conditions similar to those that initially compelled hospitals to react in extreme and unethical ways. We believe it is a human right that Parents and their hospitalized newborns remain together whenever possible and for as long as they are able. We believe it is the responsibility of every Institution (Hospitals and their NICUs) to do everything in their power to protect the mother/baby dyad, and to make it easier—not harder—for families in crisis.

### For Parents with a newborn in the NICU

1. What is currently known about Coronavirus and outcomes for neonates, newborns, and children?
2. What changes can I expect now or in the future related to screening and testing for Coronavirus; visitation policies for parents, siblings, and visitors; and preventing the spread of germs in the NICU?
3. What will happen if my baby or another baby in the NICU tests positive for Coronavirus?
4. What will happen if myself or someone in my household tests positive for Coronavirus?
5. Under what circumstances, and HOW might my presence in the NICU or my participation in my baby's daily care be impacted?
6. Based on the NICU rules currently in place how will you help me to optimize my parenting right now? Virtual opportunities, additional resources for families?

### For pregnant Parents looking ahead

If you are pregnant and curious what your Hospital's NICU visitation policies are right now, call them! You can find their phone number on the Hospital's webpage or call the Hospital's main line and ask the operator to direct you to the NICU's front desk.

In addition to the questions above, share any concerns you have and ask what visitation policies looked like before the pandemic hit, and what they are now. Policies are shifting daily, so the information you receive will give you a snapshot for today that may look different on the day your baby is born. Ask what the current protocol is for treating COVID-positive babies, and how visitation rules are implemented for COVID-suspected and COVID-positive parents. Ask how NICU staff are bridging the gap under restricted visitation or in the absence of parents, and what additional resources are currently being offered to NICU families during the COVID-19 crisis.