NEONATAL PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

Handwashing

WHY IS HANDWASHING SO IMPORTANT?

- The babies in the Intensive Care Nursery are very susceptible to infections.
- Premature babies are especially at risk. These babies have very fragile skin that tears easily. This allows bacteria from hands to enter your baby's body more easily than it would a child or adults.
- There is a difference between washing your hands and scrubbing your hands and we will address that in the following sections.

WHEN SHOULD I SCRUB?

- EVERY TIME YOU VISIT THE UNIT. Please scrub at the sink at the greeters desk prior to entering the unit.

HOW DO I SCRUB?

- We recommend that you remove all watches, bracelets and rings (except plain gold bands).
- Open the scrub brush packet and take out the small stick. Use the stick to clean under your nails.
  **This is very important because many germs like to hide there.
- Once you have cleaned under your nails, add some water to your scrub brush to lather up the soap.
- Scrub from your fingers to your elbows for a full three minutes.
- Please use the clock on the wall to monitor your three minute scrub.

WHEN IS IT OK TO JUST WASH?

- Anytime you sneeze, cough, blow your nose, eat meals or snacks, change your baby's diaper or touch your hair, shoes, etc. and especially after touching your cell phone. Cell phones tend to carry many germs and could be a source of infection for your baby. Please limit your cell phone usage when handling your baby.
- If you are visiting twins, triplets or other multiples you must wash your hands between babies.

HOW DO I WASH?

- We recommend that you remove watches, bracelets and rings (except plain gold bands).
- Place soap and water on your hands and rub them together, making a good lather.
- You must wash for at least thirty seconds for germs to be killed.

IMPORTANT THINGS I SHOULD KNOW?

- Next to your love, proper handwashing is the most important thing you and your visitors can do for your baby!
- Studies have shown that artificial nails increase the chances of infection. Germs love to hide under them. The neonatal staff has removed theirs and it is our suggestion that moms do the same.