



Early Literacy (Reading to your baby) in the NICU

What is Early Literacy?

Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write.

Research shows that children are getting ready to read from birth.

Five of the best ways to get children ready to read are:

 **Talking**

 **Singing**

 **Reading**

 **Writing**

 **Playing**

How do you as a parent/caregiver start these early literacy skills in the NICU?

Staff and volunteers encourage you to:

- ✓ Talk with your baby about what is going on around them.
- ✓ Smile and look at your baby when you talk to them.
- ✓ Repeat yourself when your baby seems interested in what you are saying.

- ✓ Ask your baby questions, even if they can't answer in words yet.
- ✓ When your baby babbles, listen carefully and answer.
- ✓ You are allowed to sing in the NICU!
- ✓ Match songs and rhymes with regular routines, like changing diapers or bath times.
- ✓ Sing songs and say rhymes in the language that is most comfortable for you – babies love the sounds of their parent's voices!
- ✓ Routines can be difficult to establish in the hospital. Reading before bedtime can help create a comfortable routine.
- ✓ Pay attention to baby's gestures and facial expressions when they look at book pages. They already know what they like.
- ✓ Young infants like black-and-white images. Older babies may like cartoons or photos of baby faces.
- ✓ If your baby is sleeping, we encourage you to continue to read to your baby—they can hear your voice! Board books with longer stories will be available for you to borrow.

Where do you get books while in the NICU at Health Sciences Centre?

- From the inpatient library, **The Book Corner**, located in room CH253 – Blue Dr. Goodbear zone. *The library is open from 1pm-3:30pm for in-person visits (as of Dec 1, 2021).*
- During a NICU parent volunteer visit.
- When library staff visit the NICU.



Where do you get books when you leave the hospital with your baby?

- At the Winnipeg Public Library!

Did You Know?

- Parent volunteers and library staff visit the NICU weekly to talk to parents about reading to their baby. They will have books available for you to borrow – they will also be giving away free reading bags full of rhymes and a book for you to keep!
- You will also be encouraged as parents/caregivers to visit the library while in the hospital – you don't need a library card! If you move to a ward or are discharged, books can remain at your bed, and staff will return them to the library.
- Once you are discharged from hospital the Winnipeg Public Library is a great resource! You can get a library card for your baby and borrow books free of charge.

We are happy to answer questions you have about reading to your baby!

**Remember –
it is never too early to start!**

The Children's Hospital Family Libraries are proudly supported by the Children's Hospital Book Market as well as donors from the community – thank you for your support so programs like this one are possible!