

# Cuddler Program



**CHaD** Children's Hospital at  
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The Cuddler Program at the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock (CHaD) helps to support the development and growth of babies staying in our Pediatric Unit, Intensive Care Nursery or the Birthing Pavilion. Cuddler volunteers are specially trained to interact with babies, both premature and full-term, during times when their parents can't be with them at the hospital.

Every parent wants to be with their baby, but sometimes jobs, appointments and family demands at home take them away. During these times, parents can take great comfort in knowing that cuddlers are available for their baby.

## Cuddlers...

- Provide the human touch needed by all babies, especially those in the hospital.
- Simply hold the baby, read to them or quietly sing to them to provide stimulation.
- Hold the babies for different amounts of time, depending on the baby's needs. The work cuddlers do helps babies grow faster, so they can go home to their families sooner.

## The Benefits of Cuddling

Research has proven the benefits to babies of extra attention and cuddle time. In addition to the care parents provide, extra human contact improves the baby's well-being. Examples include:

- Touch—cuddling, massage, and human touch in general—helps improve weight gain.
- Cuddling improves a baby's brain function and development.
- Added interaction improves the baby's early social skills.
- Babies learn to trust the adults who care for them as they experience more bonding moments.

## Cuddlers are Specially Trained

Cuddlers go through extensive classroom and bedside training, beyond what is required of a regular volunteer at Dartmouth-Hitchcock. Cuddlers follow strict hand washing practices while in the hospital to ensure babies are safe from infection. They, of course, also adhere to all hospital policies and confidentiality requirements.

### Research to Support Cuddler Programs

**Following are resources about the power of human touch for babies:**

Benoit, B., Boerner, K., Campbell-Yeo, M., Chambers, C., *The Power of Human Touch for Babies*. Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres.

Modricin-Talbott, M., Harrison, L., Groer, M., Younger, M., *The Biobehavioral Effects of Gentle Human Touch on Preterm Infants*. *Nursing Science Quarterly* January 2003, 16 (1): 60-67.