

NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT NICU



Baby Emma's parents, Paige Plagman and Trevor Seitz, appreciated the family-centered approach of the NICU health-care team during Emma's three-week stay.

Born five weeks early on Nov. 26, 2007, Emma Marie Seitz is a testament to the triumph of Mercy's NICU.

Her story is a combination of technology, compassion and dedicated nursing care – served family style.

Emma and her parents, Paige Plagman and Trevor Seitz, all were supported and cared for by the NICU health-care team during her three-week stay.

Born five weeks early, Emma relied on the Mercy NICU's top-notch technology to provide nutrients and maintain her body temperature. The future of her health depended on the medical expertise provided by Neonatologist Dr. Roger Allen, Medical Director of Mercy's advanced Level II NICU, as well as the unit's specially trained nurses and a vast array of other support services, like respiratory therapy.

Emma's parents knew she would arrive prematurely. Because neither Paige nor her baby were gaining weight, an induced delivery date was determined. Trevor remembers, "I was dumbfounded at first, but I felt comfortable with the fact that she was coming (to Mercy)



*Dr. Roger Allen
Medical Director
Advanced Level II NICU*

and everything was going to be okay. All the people down there were helpful and explained things. They were reassuring and shared their knowledge."

Immediately after delivery, Dr. Allen was there for baby Emma. Paige says that Dr. Allen reassured her by taking a moment to "explain what was going to happen when they took Emma (to the NICU). He explained she might not maintain her body temperature and could have trouble eating."

Paige soon joined Trevor at the NICU, where Emma had a feeding tube and an IV to supply nutrition while she rested in a special incubator designed to keep her warm. Other equipment, like mechanical ventilators and heart monitors, were immediately accessible for use, if and when needed.

"We had the freedom to visit whenever we wanted. For the first week-and-a-half, we could only hold her for limited times because she was not staying warm. And one day she was jaundiced so she couldn't be held," Paige explains.

The nurses were great, says Paige, adding, "They let me be the mom, but I could rest when I needed to."

As Emma's health improved, she was able to spend more and more time in Paige's room as it was located just a few steps away from NICU.

"It really is caring for the whole family," explains Terry Hayden, RN, NICU Nurse Supervisor. "And the private rooms at Mercy mimic a home setting. It is truly a family suite."

Dr. Allen concurs, "In most cases, a majority of time is not spent in the high-tech NICU environment. We take the time to not only nurture the baby, but the whole family. The goal is to have a happy and confident family who are equipped to take care of their baby."

NICU/Birthplace Director Linda Torres adds, "The difference at Mercy is that we try to give control to the family with nursing support, as opposed to having the nurses in control over the baby."

That family-centered-care approach continues even after a family leaves the hospital with the baby. A day or two after discharge, a Mercy Birthplace nurse visits the home and NICU staff members are available by telephone 24 hours day.

Dr. Allen also is the director of the Developmental Clinic, which follows up on Mercy NICU babies at regular intervals up to age 30 months. He says following their progress is extremely rewarding.



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