

Cuddle Hearts

The Neonatal Critical Care Unit lactation consultants developed the cuddle heart program in response to evidence showing the benefit to both parents and their babies.

The fabric cuddle hearts are made with love by volunteers and sent to Mater where they are washed and prepared for you and your baby. The community response to Mater's request for these homemade fabric cuddle hearts was overwhelming.

Benefits of Cuddle Hearts

- Your unique scent is comforting for your baby while they are separated from you.
- Your baby's unique scent:
 - helps you to feel close to your baby when separated
 - you may also help with your letdown reflex and establishing/maintaining your milk supply.

Precautions

Cuddle hearts are safe to use for babies in the Neonatal Critical Care Unit. However, it is important that you follow these guidelines.

- **DO NOT** use the cuddle hearts if you are:
 - unwell with vomiting or diarrhoea
 - have any cold or flu symptoms
 - have active cold sores
 - have any infectious illness (for the complete duration of that illness).
- **DO NOT** wear a cuddle heart for your baby if you smoke or use illicit drugs. You can still receive your baby's cuddle heart and experience the benefits of using their scent to assist with expressing breast milk for your baby
- Mater recommends safe sleeping practices for all babies. Therefore, cuddle hearts should no longer be used once your baby is not monitored and **DO NOT** use cuddle hearts at home.



How to use your cuddle hearts

Each packet contains three cloth hearts. These hearts are to ONLY be used in hospital while your baby is monitored.

1. Heart one — choose a cuddle heart for your baby. Your baby's nurse/midwife will help you to place the cloth heart close to your baby so it will absorb their scent.
2. Heart two — choose another heart and place on your chest when you are expressing, or in your bra, so that it will absorb your scent. Note: perfumes and scented creams might mask your own individual scent.
3. Once you have had a cuddle heart close to your skin for a few hours swap cuddle hearts with your baby. Your baby will have a cuddle heart with your scent and you will have a cuddle heart that smells like your baby. The spare cuddle heart can be washed. Once a cuddle heart has been worn by a parent and used by baby it needs to be washed.
4. A cuddle heart that has been worn and used by baby must **NOT** be worn again and needs to be washed.
5. The cuddle hearts are machine washable. The water temperature needs to be at least 40 degrees Celsius and do not use fabric softeners or highly scented laundry detergents. Once washed, the cuddle hearts can be tumbled dried on a warm setting or air dried. Make sure the cuddle heart is completely dry before using again.
6. Store washed cuddle hearts in a clean snap-lock bag until ready to be used.
7. If a cuddle heart is lost or damaged, more hearts are available at the Neonatal Critical Care Unit main reception desk.

Tips for aiding milk let-down

- Cuddle your baby skin to skin, if possible, or sit beside your baby.
- Look at photos/videos of your baby when expressing away from baby.
- Smell your baby's clothes, use the scent from the cuddle heart, or kiss your baby prior to expressing.
- Apply warmth to your breasts – warm baby wrap, heat pack or warm shower.
- Massage your breasts before and during expressing.

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