

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Healthy Growth and Development

Early growth and development have a profound effect on health across the life span. Developmental disabilities can often be mitigated if they are detected early. Every week in Wisconsin almost 100 infants are born with low birth weight, and about six percent of those will die before their first birthday. Hospitals are striving to decrease infant mortality by providing pre-conception and inter-conception care to those affected by poor birth outcomes.

Helping new parents begin the journey of a lifetime

After giving birth, most new mothers and babies are given the chance to rest while hospital staff sees to their comfort, meals and health care needs. For those first days, nurses, physicians and visitors come and go, fussing over the baby and offering proud parents advice and encouragement. Suddenly, the day arrives when the new family makes the transition from hospital bed to real life. It can be exciting and celebratory to welcome that precious, little person into their new home. But it can also be overwhelming when suddenly there is no call button to push and no nurse stationed just down the hall.

As Abby* prepared to take her baby boy home from Monroe Clinic's family birth center, she was surprised her nurse invited her to return in several days for a follow-up assessment. This was her second child, but it was the first time she delivered at Monroe Clinic and was offered this type of service.

"Before, when we left the hospital after giving birth, my baby was not seen until six weeks later by a health care provider," Abby said. "This time, it was very reassuring to come back and know everything was ok. I was even able to ask questions I had about circumcision care."

The purpose of Monroe Clinic's follow-up assessment is to provide new mothers—and fathers—a chance to return to the family birth center two or three days after discharge and meet with members of the nursing staff. They check mothers' and babies' vital signs and offer a physical assessment.

"We can check to see if a cesarean incision is healing properly, if there are any breastfeeding problems or if a little one is dealing with jaundice. We ask questions about nutrition, rest and indications of post-partum depression. And we listen to and address any concerns the parents may have," explained family birth center coach Marsha Lindh, RN, BSN.

The assessment is offered at no cost to parents, ensuring finances are not a barrier to the support they need to successfully adjust to home life with a newborn. Marsha explained the visit also helps bridge the gap between discharge and follow-up appointments that typically occur weeks or even months later.

"It addresses issues that weren't present during the hospital stay and answers questions parents didn't know to ask. Breastfeeding, sleep concerns and healing progress vary and may change dramatically once the family is home. This is especially important for moms who do not have a strong support network of friends and family, as these issues can quickly affect the mother's and baby's well-being."

If the assessment reveals any concerns or risks, the nurse checks immediately with the patient's physician to ensure the mother and child receive the proper care. The nurses also encourage parents to offer feedback during the visit about their care during their hospital stay, which can reinforce effective services and identify opportunities for positive change.

*name changed to protect patient privacy

Monroe Clinic, Monroe

Traveling the long miles for quality service

Navigating through complexities and almost constant changes in her life, Roberta Walsh keeps finding her way back to Milwaukee's Aurora Sinai Medical Center.

Roberta was a Milwaukee resident until she moved to Racine, Wisconsin six years ago. The 27-year-old single mother of five is six months pregnant and will soon be expanding her family. She receives Social Supplement Income for disability, Title 19 medical assistance and food stamps through the FoodShare program. She has been a participant in the Women,

(continued on next page)

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition and education program at Aurora Sinai Medical Center since August 2002.

Although Roberta lives in Racine, she is willing to travel the long miles to Milwaukee because of the wonderful experience she's had in the past – both with the hospital-based WIC program and for her medical care.

As Roberta puts it, "This place is a safe haven for me. Everyone makes me feel at home. I am not judged by any of the staff because I am a young mom. I am treated with dignity and respect."

Roberta has a high-risk pregnancy that requires weekly progesterone injections, bi-weekly ultrasounds and meetings with a neurologist. Logistic Transportation, funded through the Title 19 program, provides low cost transportation for her when she has medical appointments.

"They pick me up right in front of my house and as soon as my appointment is over, they pick me up on time. Everything is made so convenient for me," said Roberta.

"I try to schedule all of my appointments on the same day so I can get the most out of each trip. The staff at this hospital understands my situation and has made it possible for me to do that. Not too many hospitals would do that for their patients," Roberta continued.

She is a strong advocate for breastfeeding. Roberta breast fed all five children and plans to continue with her sixth child.

Tonya Temple, a nutrition counselor for the Aurora WIC program, educates Roberta on the basic food group pyramid and creative ways to help her children eat healthy. Roberta has experimented with adding tuna to mac and cheese to round out the nutrition for her kids. "Tonya told me as long as I add a variety of foods from the pyramid, my kids will be alright."

Roberta also learned a creative way to encourage her son to eat vegetables. "My five-year-old loves peanut butter, but did not want to eat any vegetables. I gave him a celery stick and showed him to spread the peanut butter on it. Now it has become his favorite snack," said Roberta.

The Aurora WIC program also provides farmers' market vouchers to participants as a way for them to include fresh and locally grown vegetable and fruits. Roberta makes good use of the vouchers.

Roberta cannot say enough about the difference the hospital-based WIC program is making in her life.

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

Bringing Baby Home Online Express: Because people are busy

With work, prenatal visits with the doctor and labor and delivery classes, for many expectant parents the biggest barrier to obtaining all the information and training they need is not having enough time to schedule yet another class.

So Aurora's Women's Pavilion is now offering Bringing Baby Home Online Express.

The online express class was designed to respond to the busy schedules and lifestyles of expectant parents. The coursework combines web-based instruction with one condensed classroom session and was developed for pregnant women and their partners to be taken in the 6th or 7th month of pregnancy, and for adoptive parents as well.

In the online session, participants navigate through written content at their convenience, which they access through Aurora's website. When they attend the condensed class they are able to further their knowledge (and confidence!) by engaging in hands-on demonstrations provided by the hospital's Child-Life Specialist or Registered Nurse instructor. Topics covered include:

- Newborn characteristics and care
- Parenting styles and adjusting to parenthood
- Preparing the nursery and baby safety
- Newborn care and characteristics
- Demonstrations of: bath time, diapering, swaddling and burping baby
- How the new baby affects lives and relationships

Aurora West Allis Medical Center

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.



Roberta



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.