

INFECTION CONTROL GUIDANCE

Use of materials in cots and incubators

Rationale

Babies admitted to the neonatal unit are vulnerable and at risk of infection. It is our job to ensure that we are taking precautionary measures to minimise these risks. Any items placed into the incubator are potential reservoirs of pathogenic organisms ¹ and therefore nosocomial sepsis. This has been produced in order to give staff the same guideline to work towards in order to avoid miscommunication with each other and parents.

Practice

For the purposes of this guideline, the term “incubator” also refers to hot cots (with the heated mattress switched on) and radiant warmers:

- **No toys at all** are allowed in incubators or incubator spaces (this includes the Zaky® - see appendices).
 - Only one toy allowed in bed spaces where the baby is cared for in an open unheated cot. However, the toy should not be left in the cot with the sleeping baby (SIDS prevention best practice). It should be machine washable and kept clean. It should be taken home and washed at 65 degrees² once a week **as a minimum** and when visibly soiled.
 - Blankets, nests, sheets and “budgie covers” should be changed every other day **as a minimum** and when visibly soiled. Hospital-issue sheets are sent to the laundry to be washed; blankets, nests and “budgie covers” are to be washed using the unit facilities at a temperature of at least 65 degrees².
 - “Mobiles” should be washable or wipe-able and only used in the open unheated cot.
- > The above guidance may be relaxed when caring for an infant with a life-limiting illness.

Appendices

The Zaky®



References

1. Raginel, T.; M. Bigoin-Dupont; V. Aguelon; M. Fines-Guyon and M.G. Guillemin. 2009. Audit “Toys and incubators in neonatology”. *Archives de Pediatrie*. 16(8)1202-1207
2. National Health Service Guidelines. 1995. *Hospital Laundry Arrangements for Used and Infected Linen*. London: NHS (NB: This guidance is under review)