It doesn’t matter if you are the parent of a 23-weeker or a 30-weeker or even a 35-weeker preemie. Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) season is one that is equally dreaded by all parents of preemies.

With hand sanitizers and hand soap at the ready and a mental list of questions for interrogating well-meaning but potentially germ-ridden visitors to the home, parents arm themselves to fight off illness and protect their newborn. But even they realize that they need help during this season; that it is unrealistic to expect that they can truly protect that infant from invisible germs 100% of the time.

Yet the general public is largely unaware of RSV and so parents must spend a huge amount of time educating family and friends on this topic. Sadly the parents’ desperate attempts to inform come off more as pure drama to the average person. They have not seen the inside of an NICU. They have not walked the halls where babies are hooked up to every machine imaginable. Nor have they witnessed a family saying their goodbyes to an infant born too soon and too sick to survive. The NICU to many families is a true battleground for life.

So discharge day is a bittersweet moment of celebration and total fear for these families. They see going home as a chance to be a real family. Yet they are also weighed down with more responsibility than the average family of a full-term newborn.

Germs are everywhere in the mind of a parent of a preemie and so life becomes almost OCD-like in terms of compulsive hand-washing, hand-sanitizing and practically jumping at any sneeze or cough within a mile of the baby.

Local newspapers love to put out warm stories about preemies and the “warrior” mentality of their ability to fight against all odds to survive and thrive. But they do little to warn of the lasting effects of prematurity, especially that of the concerns of re-hospitalization within the first year. It would be a public service if they could tell the story but also raise awareness about RSV on behalf of the families. Doing so could make preemie parents less fearful each winter season.

Resources

www.Inspire.com Preemie Support Forum: Boasting over 12,000 members worldwide, this forum seeks to support families in the NICU, at home and through the school years as well as through another pregnancy post-preemie. Specialty forums include “School Years,” “Preemies with CP,” “Preemie Dads,” “Preemie Angels” and more.

GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Following their previous successes, the multi-award winning writer/director of little man, Nicole Conn, and Preemie Magazine’s Founder and Publisher Deb Discenza have teamed up to create a must-have survival guide for parents in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

The Preemie Parent’s Survival Guide, (How to Maintain Your Sanity & Create a New Normal) “should be handed out to every preemie parent in the NICU,” remarks renowned neonatologist, Alan Spitzer, MD, the medical expert for Conn’s and Discenza’s unique and heartfelt guide.

Both Conn and Discenza know all too well the different life that occurs with a baby born prematurely. As parents of preemies born at 1 pound and just under 3 pounds respectively, their stories cross the spectrum of the challenges that arise early on and even continue well into the school years.

“Collectively our business, community and personal knowledge allows us to provide materials to this community that are unique and most importantly, useful,” comments Discenza.
