

COBEDDING YOUR PREMATURE BABIES

By Dianne I. Maroney

As a parent of more than one premature baby, you have double (or even triple) the worries of other parents. In the chaos of the NICU, it may be nice to know there is something more you can do to help your preemies. Cobedding twins (and sometimes triplets) is commonly practiced in Europe, however, in the United States, NICU's have only recently begun to incorporate it into their developmental care routine. Although there is not any concrete research done on cobedding, many are finding that cobedding can be a very positive experience for siblings. It can improve their rate of growth and development, stabilize heart and breathing rates, decrease their length of hospital stay, decrease overall hospital costs and number of rehospitalizations, help them regulate their sleep and awake states (meaning they move more smoothly to and from sleeping and being alert), and having siblings together in one bed can even be a source of comfort for one another. Parents like it because it gives them a sense of control, and they love to see their babies close.

Bedding premature twins or triplets together can be done on an open table-bed under a radiant warmer, in an isolette (there are even special isolettes made just for cobedding), or in a crib. There are certain restrictions for cobedding, such as waiting until both babies are stable, removed from any machines that help them breath, and free of infections. The labeling of each infants monitors, medications, etc. needs to be very meticulous so there is not any confusion with treatments or nursing interventions. Those NICU's who use cobedding frequently have published guidelines for their units and some are available in medical journals. If you'd like to know more about cobedding your infants, ask your baby's nurse for more information and encourage them to read it with you if they aren't familiar with the practice.

