

## Benefits of HALO Swaddling Program in Modeling Safe Sleep Practices

In this feature, Neonatal Intensive Care interviews clinicians and healthcare providers about the actual application of specific products and therapies. Participating in the interview from UAMS Medical Center, University of Arkansas for Medical Services is: **Rebekah Thacker, BSN, RNC-NIC, RNIV Clinical Expert – UAMS NICU.**

**Neonatal Intensive Care:** Can you tell us a bit about your hospital NICU — how many babies are you generally taking care of at any given time?

**Rebekah Thacker:** The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) NICU is a 64-bed unit with private room design in the state's only teaching medical center. We have approximately 180 nurses that care for infants born prematurely at 23 weeks to full-term, with an average census of 50 babies. We are a high-risk delivery center for the state of Arkansas, which means that many women with high-risk pregnancies deliver in our hospital where their premature infants may be cared for by neonatologists in our NICU.

**NIC:** How important is swaddling for a preemie? What are the advantages?

**RT:** Swaddling for a premature infant is extremely beneficial. Swaddling has been shown to decrease stress, provide comfort, improve neuromuscular development and reduce pain scores as well as the expression of pain in premature infants. In addition, HALO offers SleepSack Swaddles made of both 100% Cotton and Microfleece, which aids in thermoregulation of the premature infant based on his or her individual needs. This better facilitates transitioning the premature infant to an open crib once clinically stable.

**NIC:** What had you been using to swaddle babies before you discovered the HALO Safer Way to Sleep Program?

**RT:** We had been using standard hospital receiving blankets for swaddling to provide warmth and containment prior to learning about the Halo Safer Way to Sleep In-Hospital program.

**NIC:** How did you find out about the program?

**RT:** Our nursing leadership had been discussing ways to model safe sleep for the families of our patients. I had read an article in a professional journal describing how a unit had implemented safe sleep practices using handmade swaddle blankets. The article mentioned that the unit later implemented the use of HALO SleepSack Swaddles. About that same time, one of our nurses attended a nursing conference where a HALO vendor was present and received information about HALO's Safer Way to Sleep in-hospital program in addition to a sample kit. This began our partnership with HALO to develop and implement the Safer Way to Sleep program in our NICU.

**NIC:** Did you receive any instructional materials along with the product?

**RT:** Yes. Produced in partnership with First Candle, HALO provides all the necessary educational materials, including an informative brochure and safe sleep door hanger as a quick reference, in both English and Spanish, to teach our parents about safe sleep. Our nurses also use these materials to teach parents the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) regarding safe sleep and how to use the HALO SleepSack Swaddle to reduce their infant's risk of SIDS.

**NIC:** What are the specific features and benefits of the HALO SleepSack Swaddle as it relates to caring for preemies?

**RT:** The HALO SleepSack Swaddle specifically designed for premature infants features shoulder openings secured with Velcro. This feature allows easy use of the SleepSack Swaddle in infants that are stable enough to be swaddled but may have intravenous (IV) access sites in the upper extremities. In addition, the zipper is inverted, zipping downward, which allows for easy access to monitor cables and diaper change.

**NIC:** How does the use of the HALO SleepSack Swaddle help to prevent post natal hip dysplasia?

**RT:** The Halo SleepSack Swaddle has a bell shape and is designed to be spacious and non-restrictive at the bottom. The "wings" swaddle the chest and arms to provide containment and promote comfort to the upper half of the body while the legs are able to move freely for healthy hip development.

**NIC:** In addition to being a benefit to patients, what was/is the staff response to using the HALO SleepSack Swaddle?

**RT:** Our staff response to using the HALO SleepSack Swaddle as a part of our Safer Way to Sleep program was overwhelmingly positive. Six months after implementation of the Safer Way to Sleep program, we developed a nurse response survey to evaluate nurse knowledge and satisfaction with the program. Ninety-seven percent of respondents agreed that the use of the HALO SleepSack Swaddle as part of our Safer Way to Sleep program improved their ability to meet the guidelines of the AAP. Ninety-eight percent of respondents would recommend that the program be taught to health care professionals in other NICUs to standardize the practice of modeling safe sleep.

**NIC:** Would a full term baby also benefit from using the HALO SleepSack Swaddle?

**RT:** Term babies experience the same benefits as preterm infants with the use of the HALO SleepSack Swaddle. The

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Input on questions was provided by Alise Kreditor of HALO Medical. If you would like to participate in this feature, as a company or healthcare provider, please contact Steve Goldstein at [s.gold4@verizon.net](mailto:s.gold4@verizon.net).

HALO SleepSack Swaddle is designed for infants who need swaddling as well as infants who desire less containment — the “wings” may be wrapped around the infant’s chest and tucked underneath the armpits to allow the arms to move around freely. Many term infants experience improved rest and comfort during sleep when swaddled and experience less startling than infants who sleep supine but are not swaddled. In addition, use of the Halo SleepSack Swaddle reduces the risk of SIDS and accidental suffocation by replacing loose blankets in the bed that can cover the infant’s face. Parents can rest assured that their infant will stay warm and safe during sleep.

**NIC:** How important is it for the professional staff to model safe sleep practices in order for parents to learn the proper way to put baby to sleep?

**RT:** Modeling safe sleep practices with infants is crucial for healthcare professionals. Studies have shown that parents of hospitalized infants tend to continue practices they have witnessed by healthcare providers during hospitalization, regardless of the education they have received prior to discharge. If nurses are telling parents to place infants supine when they go home, but are positioning infants prone for sleep while in the hospital, parents are more likely to continue prone positioning for sleep when they are discharged home. Because premature infants are at an increased risk for SIDS, it is imperative for nurses caring for premature infants to follow AAP recommendations and to reinforce to parents the importance of a safe sleep environment for their infants. The use of the HALO SleepSack Swaddle as part of our Safer Way to Sleep program often sparks this important conversation and education between nurses and caregivers.

**NIC:** Would you recommend it to other NICUs?

**RT:** Absolutely. Our partnership with HALO has most certainly enhanced the success of our implementation of the Safer Way to Sleep program at the UAMS NICU. There are a number of resources online, and I would encourage other NICUs to go to the HALO website to learn more about bringing safe sleep to their NICU through the Safer Way to Sleep Hospital Initiative. <http://www.halosleep.com/hospitals>.

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