

Memory-Making

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Memory-Making Overview



Memory-Making Matters

We cannot change the outcome, but we can shape the memories

- Families are often overwhelmed and may not know what to ask for.
- Gentle guidance helps families feel permission to parent their baby.
- Many meaningful opportunities are time-sensitive.
- Parents rarely regret having memories — but often regret missed ones.



What Parents Share

- *He was perfect, he was exactly the same as [every other baby] in one sense it was nice, but it wasn't nice.*
- *I know it might sound ridiculous, but I'd like to have seen all of him.*

What Nurses Can Do

Offer- Don't Wait to Be Asked

- Footprints and handprints, molds, impressions;
- Photos;
- Dressing and swaddling;
- Holding and bathing;
- Naming ceremonies, blessings, or rituals; and
- Locks of hair, ID bands, blankets.



Create the Environment

- Invite family members to participate in memory-making if they wish;
- Slow the pace of the room;
- Provide privacy and uninterrupted time;
- Dim lights, reduce noise;
- Prepare supplies in advance;
- Encourage holding and talking to baby;
- Offer to help with clothing or positioning;
- Include siblings and family members when desired;
- Validate parents as parents; and
- Use the baby's name- always.

Seeing and Holding

- Seeing and holding the baby is helpful as they come to terms with their loss.
- This is the only time that the family will have to create memories.
- Parents who are unable to see and hold their baby, note feelings of regret.
- Time with baby leads to less depression and anxiety.
- Slow the pace down.
- Protect the family's privacy.
- Include siblings and family members if parents request they be present.



Image from Pixabay

Talking and Sharing

- Use the baby's name to acknowledge the personhood of the baby and the parenthood of the parents.
- Talk to the family as you write down their baby's length, weight, and time of birth.
- Talk through the things you are doing as you handle their baby.
- Compliment baby by noting characteristics like fingers, toes, noses, and hair.
- Encourage parents to sing or read to their baby if that is appropriate for them.

Photos and Videos

- Some parents are not ready to consider photography. Offer more than once.
- Many parents not offered bereavement photography or who did not accept the offer of photography, express regret.
- Most parents who have images of their baby are positive about the experience.
- Images of their baby provide proof that their baby existed.
- Bereavement photography should be normalized and offered with a personalized approach and support.



Image by Pixabay

Physical and Meaningful

- Simple items hold meaning.
 - Baby's ID band, hats, and blankets
- Offer to cut a lock of baby's hair or to have the parents cut a lock.
- Footprints and handprints are important keepsakes.
- Molds of baby's feet can be made if supplies are available.
- Memory boxes are a nice way to gather and hold any of their baby's items.
- Physical items give parents something to hold while grieving.



Photo from Unsplash

Memory-Making Items



Footprints, Handprints, and Molds

- Warm and soften feet if possible
- Take your time
- Get a friend to help
- Clean and dry the foot gently
- Press the foot against a hard surface
- Roll the foot slightly heel to toe
- Do several attempts
- Knead the clay to soften for molds



More Memory-Making Items

- Memory boxes
 - Curate as if giving to a family member
 - Include anything that touched the baby
- Blankets
 - Choose soft colors, avoid loud prints
- Weighted bears
 - Fill with rice to match baby's weight and then sew the seam



Photo from Unsplash

Supply Lists

- Ink sheets
- Mold kits
- Hats and other clothing
- Diapers
- Blankets
- Keepsake birth certificates
- Condolences card signed by staff
- Heartbeat bears
- Tiny bears for early loss
- Journals and pens
- Photo albums
- Scrapbooks
- Basin for saline photography
- Folders for resources
- Wish Lists for community donations (with hospital permission)
- [Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses \(AWHONN\) Sample Wishlist](#)

Keepsake Ideas to Share with Families

- Keepsake jewelry
- Suncatchers
- Wind chimes
- Butterfly items
- Shadow boxes
- Trees or Plants
- Artwork
- Keepsake book



Image from Pixabay

Photography



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Capturing Connection- Remembrance Photography

- Focus on candid moments of love and connection — not just posed images;
- Use a journalistic style approach;
- Black & white images;
- Encourage cell phone photos;
- Include parents, siblings, loved ones;
- Take multiple photos from different angles;
- Include small details (hands, feet, hair, and features);
- Capture keepsakes and memory items; and
- Always print photos if possible.



Photos courtesy of the Bodine Family

Bereavement Photographers

- Make community connections
- Contact [Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep \(NILMDTS\)](#)
 - Medical Affiliate program
 - NILMDTS will retouch photos
- You may be the only option



Image from Pixabay

Camera

Camera Options

- Hospital camera
- Family camera
- Cell phone camera

Camera Basics

- Keep battery charged
- Download photos after use
- Create simple instruction sheet



Image by Hanson Lu from Unsplash

Lighting

- Turn off the flash
- Overhead light
 - Dim or turn off
- Natural light
 - Best option if available
- Wall lighting
- Bathroom light
- Battery operated candles



Image from Unsplash

Space

- Move items out of the photos
 - IV pole, table, cups, and phones
- Make family comfortable
- Drape blanket or towel
- Add meaningful items
- Help family feel safe



Image by Parentingupstream from Pixabay

Photos

- Keep it natural
- Put baby in natural positions
 - On their side
 - Hands near face
 - Never cross hands over chest
 - Up close and full images
- Black and white and color
- Capture family moments
 - Holding baby
 - Singing and touching baby
 - Dressing baby
 - Cutting baby's hair
 - Siblings meeting baby
 - Additional family members

Photo Procedures

- Obtain consent forms
- Create standards for photo storage
- Make sure storage is secure
- Maintain strict chain of custody
- Designate staff member to manage
- Give parents clear instructions for photo retrieval
- Do not upload photos to patient portal
- Print several photos if requested



Image by Canon SELPHY CP1300-Printers

Saline Immersion 1 of 2

- Photography technique used for first or second trimester infant loss
- Visual preservation and rehydration
- Positioning
- Womb-like imagery
- Allows for photos at an earlier gestation and enhances features of very small babies

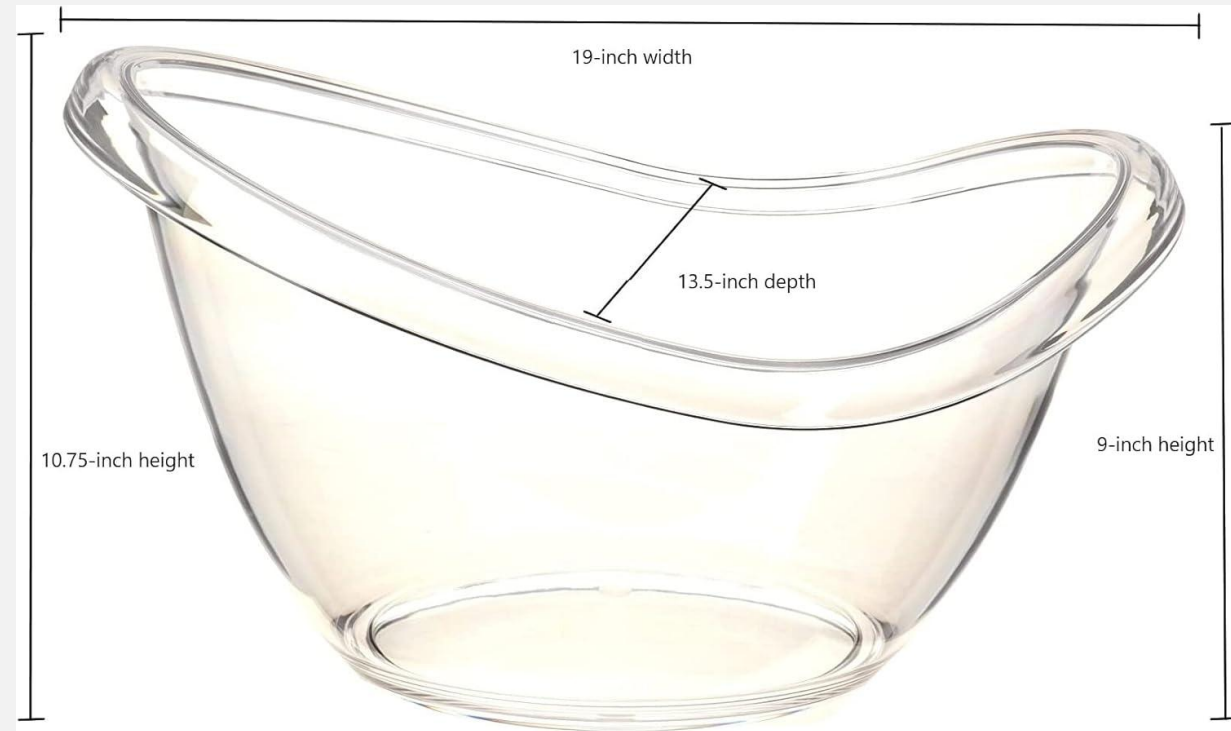
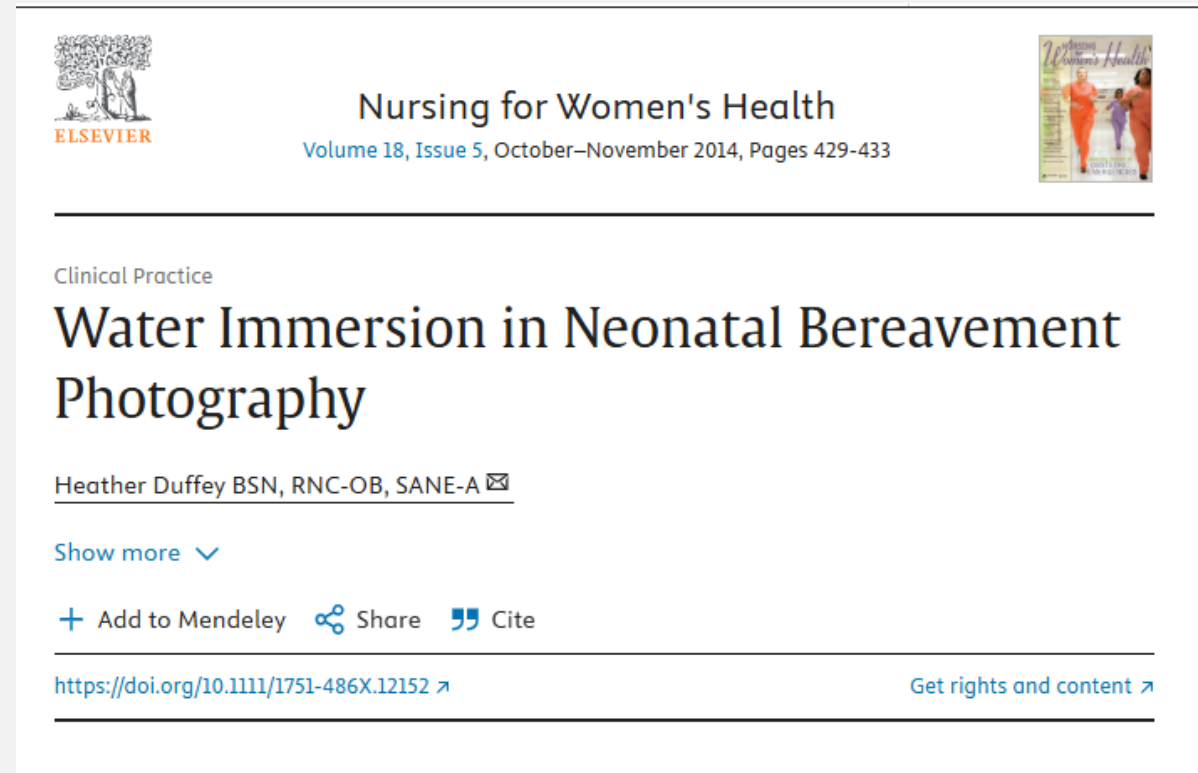


Image by Amazon- Prodyne Beverage Tub, Clear

Saline Immersion 2 of 2

- Best practices for saline immersion
 - Clear explanation of what the process involves and why it can be useful
 - Informed parental choice and consent
 - Respect for cultural, religious and personal preferences
 - Avoid pressure



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Thank you

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