

How to Make Bonding Hearts (Lovies) for NICU Families

Babies have an elevated sense of smell that begins during pregnancy. The scent of their birth parent's amniotic fluid and breast milk is an important part of cementing the parent-child bond. For NICU families, this process is often...

Making the Lovies

1. **Print the heart pattern and cut it out.** If you want to make the pattern more durable, trace the paper pattern on to something thicker such as cardstock, cardboard, a manila folder to use as a template. You can also print directly on to cardstock if your printer can accommodate larger paper. You can find the pattern here: <http://niculovies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Lovies-Pattern.pdf>
2. **Trace the heart pattern on the back side of your fabric.** You need to trace 4 hearts for every set. Then cut the fabric hearts out.
 1. Take care not to select fabric that might be interpreted as being for one particular gender.
3. **Place the two hearts together.** Put the right-sides in, and using a sewing machine, stitch all around the heart, leaving a two-inch opening. This will allow you to turn it back in the correct way. Trim the extra fabric.
4. **Turn the heart inside out using the opening you left.** Iron the heart flat.
5. **Top-stitch the heart all the way around the heart.** The finished heart should be approximately 7.5 x 7 inches. If you have an embroidery machine, you can choose to embroider the message, "From my heart to yours" on each heart.

Donating the Lovies

1. **Wash each heart with hypoallergenic detergent, such as Dreft.** Avoid using detergent that is scented or isn't hypoallergenic.
2. **Print out the instructions.** Each set of Lovies needs a set of instructions to go with them. You can find them ready to print here.
3. **Roll the two hearts together.** Tie them together with ribbon, and place them inside a ziplock bag with the printed instructions.
4. **Deliver the finished sets to your local NICU.** Please note that every hospital has unique policies regarding handmade donations. Call the hospital ahead of your delivery to make sure you're all set.

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