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Russ Cameron holds his infants Jack and Paisley while his wife, Amelia Porter, cuddles with their daughter Halley at the Saint John Regional Hospital neonatal intensive care unit Tuesday. PHOTO: CINDY WILSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Good things come in threes

Premature triplets growing healthier thanks to new hospital equipment

KELSEY PYE
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Russ Cameron holds Paisley's hand. PHOTO: CINDY WILSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN • Amelia Porter and Russ Cameron found out they were going to be parents eight weeks into their pregnancy.

They were first told they were having twins. The next day, they found out it was triplets.

“I told the hospital I wasn’t coming back anymore after that,” said Cameron.

Porter’s pregnancy was emotional. She said she was excited and stressed, but she couldn’t wait to be a mother.

Porter was due Nov. 10, 2014. Her triplets were born Aug. 9, 14 weeks premature.

The babies – Hailey, Paisley and

Jack – were each approximately two pounds when they were born.

They were dependent on machines at the neonatal intensive care unit at the Saint John Regional Hospital.

“It was definitely scary. All the machines and everything hooked up – but eventually you get used to that,” she said.

But now they’re getting better and growing stronger, thanks to updated equipment in the unit.

In 2012, the neonatal intensive care unit was renovated through a collaborative effort supported by the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation, Horizon Health, and the Department of Health.

The renovation outfitted the unit with specialized equipment, 10 patient care rooms, and three hostel rooms for mothers who must remain in hospital to prepare for their baby’s transition home.

The unit was officially opened Jan. 30, 2013.

“There’s always challenges in

this day and age to get new equipment,” said nurse Valerie Cobham-Richards.

She said the renovations to the unit have been beneficial because they allow families to bond easier, which PLEASE SEE → **TRIPLETS, B5**, and parents.

Babies are considered premature when the pregnancy lasts less than 37 weeks.

At the neonatal unit, babies are

Neonatal ICU has had major facelift

TRIPLETS → B1

cared for in incubators and rooms that mimic life in the womb.

Doors are closed, lights are lowered and blankets are placed over the incubator.

Cobham-Richards said there are currently half a dozen premature babies in the neonatal intensive care unit.

The Cameron triplets were able to be cared for in the same room in the unit, another benefit of the renovation.

The unit used to be an open concept, offering no privacy to parents. But thanks to the upgrades, Porter and Cameron could be with their little ones at the same time.

Now the family spends most of their time cuddling.

"We try and hold them each every day, but there's a lot of them," said Porter.

They are also taking part in family integrated care, a project started in 2013 that recommends parents to hold their babies as much as possible to improve bonding.

The program requires lots of skin-to-skin contact, which Cobham-Richards said improves the health of both child and parent.

"What's good for baby is good for mom," she said.

The family has been doing much better. All three triplets weigh around four pounds, double their birth weight.

They are becoming less sensitive to stimulation, and can be handled and dressed easier.

Hailey was moved from an incubator to a bed on Wednesday and has moved into a room with Jack. Paisley is still in her own room.

Cameron said it still feels unreal for him. "It hasn't really sunk in a whole lot yet."



Amelia Porter holds her daughter Hailey at the Saint John Regional Hospital neonatal intensive care unit Tuesday.

PHOTO: CINDY WILSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Porter said the staff in the unit have been crucial in not only her babies' health, but also making her feel at ease during this period.

"Everyone here has been so good explaining all the machines and what they do. They make us feel comfortable and make sure everything is okay," she said.

Porter has felt many emotions since first finding out she was pregnant.

But after everything has been said and done, there's only one emotion left.

"They're little miracles that they're still here and they're doing as well as they are," she said.

"I just can't wait to take them home."



Little Paisley sucks her thumb. PHOTO: CINDY WILSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL