**An Open Letter to Loved Ones**

*All newborns are vulnerable during the first few months of life, but certain babies—especially those born prematurely or with certain chronic conditions that make them especially susceptible to infection—need extra protection while their immune systems develop. As the parent of a high-risk infant, sometimes it’s hard to explain to friends and family why you take certain precautions. Parents of healthy, full-term babies may not understand and some may perceive your actions to be “extreme” or “paranoid.” But you know how important it is to prevent your baby from getting sick.*

*If you haven’t quite found the words to explain why you wish to take extra precautionary measures to keep your baby healthy, the below open letter may be a helpful tool in explaining your situation. Or, if you know of someone who recently had a high-risk baby and is having difficulty finding acceptance and understanding, share this with them and let them know they aren’t alone.*

Dear **[Loved One],**

I know sometimes people think I go to extreme lengths to protect **[Baby]**, and I understand my methods may seem strange. I wanted to send this note to you to give you insight on what life is like when you’re perceived as an “overprotective” parent.

**[Baby]** was born **[prematurely or with X condition]**, which puts **[him/her]** at an increased risk of developing a serious infection from many common, seemingly harmless, germs and viruses. For example, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is an extremely common virus that all babies contract by their second birthday. Most infants have the immune system and lung strength to fight off the virus, but in high-risk babies, it can cause a very serious infection. In fact, serious RSV infection is the leading cause of infant hospitalization. Note: For more information on the dangers of RSV, you can check out [www.RSVprotection.com](http://www.RSVprotection.com).

Because **[Baby]** is so vulnerable to RSV and other illnesses, it’s important to us to avoid exposing **[him/her]** to these germs. Viruses like RSV are highly contagious and can live for hours on objects like countertops, doorknobs and toys. Frankly, the idea that visitors may unknowingly bring in these dangerous germs is very scary to a new parent!

So I’m asking that you please be patient with me and my precautions to keep **[Baby]** safe. Please contact me before dropping by for a visit, and know that while I hate turning you away or asking you not to come over, it’s always for a good reason and never personal.

And when we’re eventually ready for visitors, please remember that prevention is key to keeping **[Baby]** safe.

* Please refrain from visiting when you are sick or if you’ve been around someone ill.
* Please make sure your clothes are clean and you haven’t smoked or been around smokers recently. Smoke can be very dangerous for underdeveloped lungs.
* Let’s wait until **[Baby]** is strong enough to be introduced to your little one**(s)**, You know I love seeing **[him/her]**, but toddlers and school-aged children are very likely carriers of germs and viruses.
* Wash your hands immediately when you come into the house, or sanitize during your visit – this is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs. Wash, wash, wash!

I hope this helps to explain a bit better why I’ve been keeping **[Baby]** in and, often, visitors out. I appreciate your understanding and look forward to seeing **[Baby]** grow stronger and healthier everyday with your help!

Best,

**[Mom]**