



**HAND to HOLD**  
*Fragile Babies. Strong Support.*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Internationally Renowned OB/GYN to Discuss Mind-Body Connections to Help Premies Reach Their Full Potential**

*Public Invited to Free Discussion Series Organized by Hand to Hold*

AUSTIN, Texas (June 7, 2010) – Dr. Jennifer Gunter, an internationally renowned OB/GYN and author of *The Premie Primer* will discuss Mind-Body Connections and how to counter the effects of severe emotional stress that parents of premies often experience during and after a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit stay. Organized by Hand to Hold, a nonprofit supporting parents of premies, the public is invited to attend the free discussion series which will be held on Wednesday, June 23, 2010, at St. David's Medical Center from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Dr. Gunter will delve into the science behind the mind-body connection and how parents can use these valuable techniques to help their premature baby reach his or her potential. She will provide valuable information about how the mind-body connection works, the benefit of support programs and review the often-times under diagnosed conditions of post-partum depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among parents who have had a child in the NICU.

“I obviously thought it [preterm birth] would be very difficult for parents, however, I had no idea of the magnitude until I experienced it myself,” said Dr. Jennifer Gunter of the emotional stress parents experience during and after a child is in the NICU. Dr. Gunter is the mother of three boys born extremely prematurely, two of whom survived.

Research has shown that parents who have had a child in the NICU often experience severe emotional distress that continues long after the child has been discharged from the hospital. Parents have reported having nightmares about their child's birth and time in the hospital, intrusive thoughts, anxiety, difficulty sleeping and attempts to avoid reminders of the trauma. A Stanford University School of Medicine study published in 2009 found high rates of symptoms of traumatic stress in parents of NICU infants in the first few weeks after birth. They also found that for some parents (fathers in particular) those trauma symptoms were sometimes delayed by as much as four months.

“We organized this discussion series to bring more awareness and understanding to parents who have had a preterm birth or child in the NICU to better equip them to care for themselves and their child,” explains Kelli Kelley, Founder and Executive Director of Hand to Hold and mother of two premature children.



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“In Central Texas, we have found that until recently few resources existed to support parents emotionally during and after a NICU experience. We aim to change that situation for the approximately 2,000 babies who are born premature in Travis County each year.”

Hand to Hold is a nonprofit organization that provides peer-to-peer support and resources to parents who have had a premature infant, a child with a special health care need, or who have experienced a loss. For more information about the Discussion Series, visit [www.HandtoHold.org](http://www.HandtoHold.org) or call (512) 293-0165.

### **About Hand to Hold**

Founded in 2010, Hand to Hold ([www.HandtoHold.org](http://www.HandtoHold.org)) is an Austin-based nonprofit that provides support to parents whose child was born prematurely or with special health care needs and for those who have experienced a loss by offering a comprehensive support program, resources and information to ensure the best outcomes for babies and their families.

### **About Dr. Jennifer Gunter**

Dr. Jennifer Gunter is the mother of triplet boys born extremely prematurely. She is a nationally and internationally renowned obstetrician/gynecologist and author of the *Preemie Primer*. Dr. Gunter is the recipient of numerous research awards and has published extensively in medical journals and authored many book chapters. She has been interviewed by numerous national magazines, including *More, U.S. News and World Report, Glamour, Redbook, and Shape*. Her writing has also appeared in *Exceptional Parent, Parents Press, Sacramento Parent, and the Marin Independent Journal*. Dr. Gunter also writes a sexual health column for [examiner.com](http://examiner.com).

Dr. Gunter was born and raised in Winnipeg, Canada and graduated from The University of Manitoba School of Medicine in 1990 at the age of 23. In 1995 she completed her OB/GYN residency training at the University of Western Ontario and moved to the United States to complete a fellowship in infectious diseases at the University of Kansas Medical Center. After completing her fellowship she continued her studies in pain medicine and currently is the only OB/GYN in the United States who is board certified in both OB/GYN and pain medicine.

She practices Obstetrics and Gynecology with The Permanente Medical Group at the San Francisco Medical Center – Center for Pelvic Pain. Dr. Gunter and her husband live in the San Francisco Bay Area with her two sons.

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