

EARLY SKIN-to-SKIN CONTACT

You are the best “recovery room” for your new baby!

Skin-to-skin means your baby is placed unclothed onto your chest, against your skin and under a blanket or your clothing.

Your baby will be placed on your chest right after birth. Having your baby skin-to-skin helps the baby to feel safe, stay warm and maintain a healthy blood sugar. Bathing and non-essential medical and nursing tasks are delayed for at least one hour after the baby is born, while essential tasks will take place with your baby skin-to-skin.

What does skin-to-skin do?

- Babies are comforted by being placed skin-to-skin with their mother right after birth. They are calmer and cry less.
- It regulates the baby's temperature, breathing and heart rate.
- Helps the baby to have better oxygen levels and blood sugar levels.
- Stimulates milk production.
- The movement of your baby's body on your body stimulates hormones that cause your uterus to contract and bleed less.
- Promotes feelings of closeness and protectiveness.
- Being skin-to-skin is also pain-relieving to the baby, such as during an injection or heel-stick procedure.
- This is a great time for both of you to get to know one another. The bonding that takes place during skin-to-skin time lasts long after birth.

How does skin-to-skin help breastfeeding?

- The baby can smell colostrum at birth. Amniotic fluid has a smell similar to colostrum, so the baby is drawn to the breast by the familiar smell.
- Babies are more alert and left undisturbed between your breasts. The baby may nuzzle down to the breast by himself or herself and latch on unassisted.
- A baby's hand movements at the breast, as well as his or her sucking, cause the mother's body to release milk-making hormones.
- Babies need to be close to the breast to learn to breastfeed. This first skin-to-skin time is the best opportunity to begin breastfeeding.
- The baby has more opportunity to feed and gains more weight.
- The baby breastfeeds better and longer overall.

The benefits continue:

Even after the first four hours of skin-to-skin time, continue to place your baby skin-to-skin over the next several days. If the baby is fussy, this will help calm him or her. If the baby is too sleepy to nurse, this will stimulate and encourage him or her to breastfeed. Skin-to-skin time continues to help warm and comfort the baby. It also continues to help make breastfeeding a successful and enjoyable experience. Dads can do skin-to-skin time too! Although the dad cannot breastfeed, the baby knows it is Dad's voice and feels safe with him also.