

# Welcome Baby Softly

The birth of a baby is a special time of excitement. The baby has left the warmth of your body, is exposed to bright lights, voices and new surroundings. It is comforting for the newborn to be held in your arms, hearing your heartbeat and the warmth and smell of your body and listening to your voice during this time of transition. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the baby's first days are as nurturing as possible.

## Why the First Hour Is So Important

Right after birth, babies are awake and receptive and their senses are very alert.

- **Sight** – Newborns are able to see a distance of around 8-12 inches ... about the same distance from baby's face to your face when baby is being held to breastfeed. Newborns love to look at faces and will spend the first few moments exploring the outline of your face and then gazing at your eyes. Your baby thinks you are the most beautiful person in the world!
- **Hearing** – Talk softly to your baby. He or she already recognizes the sound of your voice.
- **Smell** – Babies have a sharp sense of smell and especially love the smell of the amniotic fluid.
- **Taste** – Babies like the flavor of your colostrum, the first milk you make. Their desire to suck is very strong and they will nurse eagerly. The nurses will help you learn to breastfeed.
- **Touch** – Your baby was snuggled within your uterus. Holding your baby "skin-to-skin" in the first hour or two after birth helps your baby feel calm, warm and secure.

## Other Things You Can Do

- **Consider not taking a shower for the first 24 hours**, at least from the waist up.
- **Avoid products with strong smells** (such as perfumes and deodorants) in the first few days.
- **Ask visitors and family to wait at until after at least the first day to come see you.** Who you allow to visit is a very personal decision and should be discussed with your partner before the big day arrives. If you decide to allow visitors, consider only allowing immediate family and close friends to visit while in the hospital. This enables you to focus on rest, bonding and feeding your baby. You can ask your nurse to help you by placing a sign on your door stating that you are resting. Encourage others to wait to visit you until you are comfortably home with your baby.

## Special Role of Dads and Family

- **Let the nurses know what you and baby's mother have decided is important to you in the first few hours.** Delay weighing and bathing the baby until at least after baby's first breastfeeding.
- **Enjoy your new baby!** Enjoy counting fingers and toes, lovingly touch and stroke your baby and talk softly. Congratulate mom and let her know how special she is to you. She has gone through a lot in the last nine months to bring your baby into the world!
- **Ask visitors to wait at least a day before coming to the hospital or holding baby. Keep visitors to a bare minimum.** This enables you and baby's mother to rest and really get to know your baby.
- **Snuggle with your baby and participate in his or her care.** Watch your new baby so mom can rest. Babies love skin to skin and snuggling this way is a great way to bond.
- **Support the mother's breastfeeding efforts.** There are many, many benefits to breastfeeding that last a lifetime for both mother and baby. Mom needs to know that you are supportive of her and will be there for her if she has breastfeeding challenges. You can help burp, bathe and change baby's diapers.