

#6: Early Skin-to-Skin Contact

Prenatal Education



“Hi Mom. I’m home!”

Those are words you’ll hear several years from now, but that is also the expression that best states your baby’s desire right after birth — to be next to you! You have been his or her “home” for the past nine or so months; the place of warmth, feeding and comfort. The best way to bring your baby back into this place of comfort and warmth is called skin-to-skin.

What is skin-to-skin?

Simply put, your baby is placed bare-skinned onto your chest. Any assessments or procedures that are done routinely for your baby can either be delayed for this important time together, or performed while he or she is on your chest.

What are the results from having skin-to-skin time?

- **Happier Baby**—Your baby is comforted by being placed skin-to-skin with you right after birth. He or she is calmer and cries less. Being skin-to-skin also provides pain relief, such as during an injection or heel-stick procedure.
- **Healthier Baby**—When your baby is placed skin-to-skin, they will warm up better and learn to stabilize their temperature more quickly. Your baby’s respirations, heart rate, and blood sugar stabilize better and their oxygen levels are highest when receiving skin-to-skin contact. So you see, you are the best “recovery room” for your new baby!
- **Happier Mother**—Being skin-to-skin helps lower your stress hormones, and makes you feel closer to your baby. 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.
- **Healthier Mother**—The movement of your baby’s body on your body stimulates hormones that cause your uterus to contract and therefore you bleed less.
- **Better Breastfeeding**—When your baby is placed undisturbed on your chest, between the breasts, he or she will often crawl toward your nipple and latch unassisted. Your baby is able to smell the colostrum in your breast. Since amniotic fluid is similar in smell to colostrum, he or she is naturally drawn to your breast. In addition, your baby’s hand movements at the breast, as well as their sucking, cause your body to release milk-making hormones. Your baby who has been placed skin-to-skin may gain weight better and breastfeed better and longer. Your baby needs to be close to the breast to learn to breastfeed. This first skin-to-skin time is the best opportunity to begin breastfeeding.

The benefits continue

Even after your first skin-to-skin time, continue to place your baby skin-to-skin. If your baby is fussy, this will help to make them calm. If your baby is too sleepy to nurse, this will stimulate and arouse them to breastfeed. Skin-to-skin time continues to help make your baby warm and comforted, and it continues to help make breastfeeding a successful and enjoyable experience.