

# For NEW PARENTS and PARENTS TO BE

## Holding your baby skin-to-skin

**Skin-to-skin means holding your bare baby (with or without a diaper) against your bare chest or tummy. Your body is the safest and most comfortable place for your baby to adjust to life after birth and during the first weeks and months after birth. When your baby is skin-to-skin your baby can feel you, smell you, hear you, taste you and get to know you.**

Skin-to-skin is recognized as being important for your baby, for you and for feeding your baby.



**Holding your baby skin-to-skin during the first hours, weeks and months of life can help...**

### ...BABY

- by reducing stress during the first hours after birth
- stay warmer, calmer and cry less (compared to babies who are swaddled or wrapped)
- by regulating breathing, heart beat and blood sugar
- by strengthening their immune system, reducing risk of infection
- by reducing stress and pain during procedures like blood tests or vaccinations
- by supporting healthy brain development
- bond with mom and family members
- get into a stable feeding pattern and sleep cycle.

*\* All babies benefit from being held skin-to-skin regardless of how they are fed.*

### ...MOM

- by reducing postpartum bleeding
- bond with baby
- learn and respond to baby's cues, like when baby is hungry
- soothe baby
- feel more confident caring for baby
- feel more relaxed
- by reducing postpartum anxiety and depression.

### ...BREASTFEEDING

- by getting breastfeeding off to a good start
- by making it easier for baby to latch to the breast
- by helping make more breastmilk.

## HOLD YOUR BABY SKIN-TO-SKIN

### When your baby is born

As soon as your baby is born, (as long as mom and baby are stable) your baby can be placed skin-to-skin on mom's tummy/chest and covered with a blanket. Skin-to-skin right after birth for the first hours, without interruption, is important for your baby. Your health care providers can listen to your baby's heart and breathing and do other newborn checks while you cuddle your baby skin-to-skin. Other procedures can usually wait until after this time. You may also want to wait to have visitors until after this special time.

Your health care team will make every effort to keep mom and baby together whenever possible. Sometimes for medical reasons moms and babies are separated after birth. In these cases a partner/support person can hold baby skin-to-skin while mom is recovering.

### During Painful Procedures

Holding your baby skin-to-skin can reduce your baby's stress and pain during painful procedures (e.g. blood tests and vaccinations). Let your health care provider know you would like to breastfeed and/or hold your baby skin-to-skin during these procedures.

### Through the first weeks and months

As your baby grows, continue holding your baby skin-to-skin.

Partners and other family members can also bond with your baby by holding them skin-to-skin. Cuddling with your baby skin-to-skin can create special bonds with the entire family.

## SAFE SKIN-TO-SKIN

- Sit upright or partially upright
- Make sure your baby can easily breathe through their nose and mouth
- Make sure your baby can easily lift their head and chest by themselves at all times
- Hold your baby securely so they cannot fall
- If you are feeling drowsy or may fall asleep put your baby in a safe place or give them to another caregiver.

### Practical Tips:

Some ideas to consider that may make skin-to-skin more comfortable for you and your baby:

- Wear your hospital gown or robe so it ties in the front and place baby on your chest inside your gown.
- Wear v-neck, button-down or zippered shirts and place baby on your chest inside your shirt.

Visit: [www.smdhu.org](http://www.smdhu.org)



*Your Health Connection*

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If you haven't held your baby skin-to-skin yet, start now. It's not too late!

