



SKIN-TO-SKIN CARE WITH YOUR BABY

What is skin-to-skin care?

Skin-to-skin care involves holding your baby close against your skin on your chest. It is good for both you and your baby. It is sometimes called kangaroo care.

How does it help?

Benefits for baby

Skin-to-skin care is a way of having close contact with your baby and can help to stabilise and regulate your baby's heartbeat, breathing and oxygen levels. Your baby may be more settled and able to sleep for longer periods. This also helps your baby to grow and may prepare your baby for breastfeeding.

Benefits for parents

Research has shown that skin-to-skin care helps parents with emotional attachment and bonding with their baby. While babies sleep better during skin-to-skin care, mothers and fathers holding their baby also benefit from reduced stress and anxiety. For mothers, it may improve milk supply and breastfeeding. It allows you and your baby to experience and learn from one another's cues, smells and voices.

Doing skin-to-skin care

The baby's nurse may suggest that you hold your baby skin-to-skin or you can tell your nurse that you want to do skin-to-skin care with your baby. The nurse will help to prepare you, your baby and the environment so you can both enjoy being close.

Clothing for you and your baby

The idea is to make it easy for you to hold your baby so that you are making skin-to-skin contact. A shirt or top that opens at the front is best or you could change into a hospital gown with the opening in the front. We encourage mothers to remove their bra to allow closer skin-to-skin contact but you don't have to. Your baby will be dressed in just a nappy and sometimes a hat and placed with their tummy and chest against your bare chest. They may be in a head up position (like a kangaroo) or in a side lying position.

Getting ready

We will find you a comfortable chair with a pillow. You may be sitting for a while so a bathroom stop before you start is a good idea. Tell the nurse if you would like to have the screens open or closed. We will aim to have the lights dimmed and the room quiet.

You or the nurse will transfer your baby slowly from their incubator or cot and position them on your chest. Their oxygen or breathing support tubing will be adjusted to ensure your baby is comfortable.

Positioning

You may like to recline yourself a little in the chair so that you are comfortable. Once settled in a position support your baby's head with one hand and hold their bottom with your other hand – your baby's position should be curled or tucked up. The nurses will help you with positioning so your baby's face is visible. There are mirrors available, so you can look at your baby's face.

How will my baby react?

Remember it may take some time for your baby to adjust to the transfer and new position. Babies are usually very comfortable in this position and often fall asleep. Your baby can stay in skin-to-skin contact as long as you are both happy and during feeds. Babies love to hear the sound of their parent's voice, so try humming or singing to your baby while you are having skin-to-skin care.

You and the nurse can monitor your baby's comfort level and behavioural cues to help decide if your baby needs a positional adjustment.

More information

Visit our website www.thewomens.org.au and search for *Breastfeeding sick and premature babies*.