

Skin-to-skin for your premature baby



Babies born very early need to stay in the neonatal intensive care unit. Modern intensive care helps your baby but only close contact with their parents will support normal development.

You can always be close to your baby doing skin-to-skin. Skin-to-skin is safe and very beneficial for your baby and you.

It is normal to feel nervous, but the earlier you start doing skin-to-skin the more confident you will feel caring for your tiny baby.

What is skin-to-skin?

- Skin-to-skin is when you hold your baby, who is wearing only a nappy, on your bare chest
- You and your baby are then covered with a blanket creating a snugly pouch for your baby



Skin-to-skin can help you with emotional bonding with your baby

- Direct contact with your skin is what keeps your baby warm and stable
- You should do skin-to-skin as much as possible while your baby is in the hospital

Who can do skin-to-skin?

- Holding your premature baby during skin-to-skin is safe
- Mothers, fathers, or other caregivers can do skin-to-skin
- Twins can have skin-to-skin together

How do I do skin-to-skin care?

- Plan to spend at least 60-90 minutes holding your baby, ideally longer
- Wearing a shirt or top that opens in the front can be helpful to make it easier to place the baby on your chest
- We encourage mothers to remove their bra to maximise skin-to-skin contact with their baby (we can provide a hospital gown)
- We encourage you to use only mildly scented deodorants and soap and not to smoke immediately before skin-to-skin to avoid discomfort for your baby
- Your baby will wear just a nappy and sometimes a hat
- Nursing staff will help you move and position your baby while you are reclined in the chair

- Your baby will usually be placed with their tummy and chest against your bare chest either in a head up position or side lying position
- You can use a mirror to see your baby's face
- You can use a breast pump after you finish skin-to-skin. Many mothers make more milk after doing skin-to-skin



Holding your premature baby during skin-to-skin is safe

Skin-to-skin benefits for premature babies

- Baby's heart rate, breathing rate, and oxygen levels stabilise while being warm
- Baby may be more settled, sleep better and have less stress and pain
- It is good for baby's brain development as it mimics the familiar environment of the womb
- Baby's skin is covered with 'beneficial bacteria' from the parent decreasing the risk of hospital infections
- It is an opportunity to bond with their parents
- It helps your baby grow and get ready for breastfeeding.

Skin-to-skin benefits for parents

- Skin-to-skin helps parents with emotional bonding with their baby
- Skin-to-skin improves milk supply and breastfeeding
- Skin-to-skin helps parents learn and understand baby's cues, smells, and voices

How will my baby react?

- Babies are usually very comfortable during skin-to-skin contact.
- Babies usually fall asleep easier, and their heart rate and respiratory rate are more stable
- Baby reacts to your voice so reading or talking to your baby is recommended



Mothers, fathers, or other caregivers can do skin-to-skin

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