



Holding Your Baby Skin-to-Skin

Having direct skin-to-skin time with your baby provides benefits to both you and your baby in the following ways:

- Stabilizes your baby's heart rate and breathing and helps maintain body temperature
- Improves your baby's weight gain
- Calms, comforts and promotes restful sleep for your baby
- Helps your baby acquire healthy bacteria from your skin
- Improves your milk production
- Promotes attachment and bonding
- Promotes better breastfeeding later



Skin-to-Skin Tips

Wear a loose-fitting, button-down or zip shirt.

Encourage your partner to do skin-to-skin also.

Try to hold your baby skin-to-skin every visit.

If your baby is too small or fragile to be picked up, ask your baby's nurse about "resting hands," also called containment. This is when you lightly rest your hands directly on your baby. Because small preemies may be sensitive to too much stimulation, you should avoid stroking or moving your hands for the time being. Premature infants will relax better with just a gentle, steady touch.



How often should I hold my baby skin-to-skin?

We recommend that you hold your baby skin-to-skin every day throughout your baby's NICU stay for at least an hour at a time. Your baby will soon learn it is pleasurable and will relax, settle down and grow. Plan your skin-to-skin time around your pumping schedule. When your baby is little or ill, skin-to-skin time may require some help.

Every day is a new day for your baby, so when you call in the morning, remind your baby's nurse that you want to do skin-to-skin. We believe that babies who have skin-to-skin time will be calmer, happier babies. They also learn to breastfeed more quickly.

What if my baby has a breathing tube or is on nasal CPAP?

Skin-to-skin can be done if your baby has a breathing tube or is on nasal CPAP. Your baby must be stable enough to tolerate being moved to your chest, so ask your nurse when your baby will be ready. Moving your baby can be a little tricky if there are a lot of wires or tubes, so a nurse and respiratory therapist will help you. As your baby matures and you gain confidence, you will learn to do this on your own.