

# Skin-to-Skin Contact for You and Your Baby

## What's "Skin-to-Skin"?

Skin-to-skin means your baby is placed belly-down, directly on your chest, right after she is born. Your care provider dries her off, puts on a hat, and covers her with a warm blanket and gets her settled on your chest. The first hours of snuggling skin-to-skin let you and your baby get to know each other. They also have important health benefits. If she needs to meet the pediatricians first, or if you deliver by c-section, you can unwrap her and cuddle shortly after birth. Newborns crave skin-to-skin contact, but it's sometimes overwhelming for new moms. It's ok to start slowly as you get to know your baby.

## Breastfeeding

Snuggling gives you and your baby the best start for breastfeeding. Eight different research studies have shown that skin-to-skin babies breastfeed better. They also keep nursing an average of six weeks longer. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all breastfeeding babies spend time skin-to-skin right after birth. Keeping your baby skin-to-skin in his first few weeks makes it easy to know when to feed him, especially if he is a little sleepy.

## A Smooth Transition

Your chest is the best place for your baby to adjust to life in the outside world. Compared with babies who are swaddled or kept in a crib, skin-to-skin babies stay warmer and calmer, cry less and have better blood sugars.

## Bonding

Skin-to-skin cuddling may affect how you relate with your baby. Researchers have watched mothers and infants in the first few days after birth, and they noticed that skin-to-skin moms touch and cuddle their babies more. Even a year later, skin-to-skin moms snuggled more with their babies during a visit to their pediatrician.



## Skin-to-Skin Beyond the Delivery Room

Keep cuddling skin-to-skin after you leave the hospital—your baby will stay warm and comfortable on your chest, and the benefits for bonding, soothing and breastfeeding likely continue well after birth. Skin-to-skin can help keep your baby interested in nursing if he's sleepy. Dads can snuggle, too. Fathers and mothers who hold babies skin-to-skin help keep them calm and cozy.

## About the Research

Multiple studies over the past 30 years have shown the benefits of skin-to-skin contact. In all the studies described here, mothers were randomly assigned to hold their babies skin-to-skin or see them from a distance. For more information, see Anderson GC, GC. Moore, E. Hepworth, J. Bergman, N. Early skin-to-skin contact for mothers and their healthy newborn infants. [Systematic Review] *Cochrane Pregnancy and Childbirth Group Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. 2, 2005.

*Information provided by Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition. For more information please visit [www.massbfc.org](http://www.massbfc.org)*