

Skin-To-Skin Care

Skin-to-skin care helps babies adjust to life outside the womb. It promotes bonding between the parent and child. Skin-to-skin care is a way of holding your baby. It is also known as kangaroo care, because of how kangaroos hold their newborns in their pouch.

How to hold your baby

Place your baby upright on your chest between your breasts (Figure 1). Make sure that your shirt is off or open. This lets the baby lay directly on your skin. Turn their head to the side. Keep their legs frogged out over your belly. Your baby should wear only a diaper and a hat, if needed. You can cover your baby's back with a blanket or your clothes. Tuck the material underneath your armpits to create a warm and cuddly pouch for your baby.

Figure 1. Skin-to-skin position



Skin-to-skin care tips

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin as soon as possible after birth. This lets your baby feel your heartbeat and get familiar to your touch.
- Do skin-to-skin care as often as you can.
- Spend at least 1 hour doing skin-to-skin each time.
- Wear clothes that open in the front for easier access.
- If possible, take off any clothing for direct skin-to-skin contact.

Benefits of skin-to-skin care

There are many benefits of skin-to-skin care for your baby. It helps keep their body temperature, heart rate, breathing and blood pressure regular. It helps their brain cells and emotional stability develop. Skin-to-skin care also helps your baby grow and develop. Babies held skin-to-skin often leave the hospital sooner.

For your baby

The benefits of skin-to-skin care for your baby also include:

- Less crying
- Better breastfeeding (babies who get skin-to-skin care breastfeed for an average of 6 weeks longer than babies who did not get skin-to-skin care)
- Quicker weight gain
- Better sleep and feeding cues

For you

Skin-to-skin care helps parents and caregivers bond with their baby. Getting to know your baby this way can help you feel:

- More control in your baby's well-being
- Greater confidence in caring for your baby
- A smoother transition into your new family dynamic

Skin-to-skin contact also promotes better breast milk production in mothers.

Babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

If your baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), you can still do skin-to-skin care.

- Do as much skin-to-skin as your baby's care team allows.
- Hand express and massage your breasts for regular stimulation. You can do this in the NICU or in your separate room. Try to do this for 15 to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours (or 8 to 12 times each day).

To learn more

Watch this video about hand expression from [first.droplets.com](https://www.firstdroplets.com).



If you have any questions about skin-to-skin care, please ask your care team.