

Safe Skin-to-Skin Contact with Your Newborn



After you give birth, your care team may place your newborn directly on your chest, skin touching skin. This contact is very good for you and your baby's health. So don't pass it up. But make sure you are doing it correctly to keep your baby safe. Your care team will show you how.

Benefits of skin-to-skin contact

Skin-to-skin contact is encouraged for many reasons. It can help your baby adjust to life outside the womb. It can calm your newborn and promote bonding. This type of contact can also help regulate your child's breathing, blood sugar level, and body temperature. Plus, it can help make breastfeeding easier, if you intend to do so.

Another benefit of skin-to-skin contact is that it can foster the growth of many types of bacteria that normally live in the digestive tract. These bacteria can help your baby better absorb nutrients, help prevent infection, and strengthen your baby's immune system.

Tips for safe skin-to-skin contact

You and your baby will be watched closely after birth. And you will be taught how to safely position your baby during skin-to-skin contact and while breastfeeding. Making sure your baby is in the correct position may help prevent sudden unexpected postnatal collapse (SUPC).

SUPC is when an otherwise healthy baby has a sudden loss of breathing and heart function. SUPC may happen when a baby moves into a wrong position during skin-to-skin contact or breastfeeding and their airway becomes blocked. While rare, SUPC can be devastating. It can cause serious brain injury and even death.

To help keep your baby safe during skin-to-skin contact, follow these tips:

- Sit at a semi-reclined angle with your baby's shoulders and chest facing you when your baby is on your chest. Turn their head to the side, so you can see their face. Keep your baby's nose and mouth uncovered. Make sure your baby's head is tilted back slightly (sniffing position), neck is straight, and chin is not touching their chest. Their legs should be flexed and their back should be covered with a blanket.
- Keep a close eye on your baby at all times. Make sure the room is well lit. Watch for any changes in your baby's color, temperature, activity, or breathing.
- Avoid distractions during skin-to-skin contact and while breastfeeding. For example, don't use your phone.
- Speak up if you aren't sure about your baby's position or their condition. Healthcare providers are on hand to help.
- If you feel sleepy, ask an adult support person who is awake and alert for help watching your baby. Or safely place your baby on its back in a crib or bassinet.

Once at home with your baby, continue to follow these tips. Also always place your baby on their back to sleep in their crib or bassinet.

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