

Skin-to-Skin Care for Your Baby

Skin-to-skin care (STS), or kangaroo care, is a special way to hold your baby. They only wear a diaper while on your bare chest (Picture 1). Your baby is most comfortable being close to you since they already know your scent, touch, voice, and heartbeat. Skin-to-skin care has many benefits for babies, especially if they were born early or at low birth weight, and for parents.

Benefits for your baby:

- Stay warmer, which is good for their body temperature.
- Have a better heart and breathing rate.
- Gain weight and sleep better.
- Cry less and have lower stress levels.
- Have less pain and a lower risk of infections.
- Have better brain growth and development.
- Bond better with the parent doing it.

Benefits for parents:

- Bond better with their baby.
- Have lower stress levels.
- Increase their milk supply and have a better chance of breast/chest feeding.
- Gain more confidence in caring for their baby.



Picture 1 Skin-to-skin care

Before Holding

You can start doing skin-to-skin holding as soon as you're able to be at your baby's bedside. Let the nurse know when you're ready to hold. They can explain the process and answer any questions. Before doing skin-to-skin care the first time, it may help to do a practice session.

Things to do before skin-to-skin holding:

- Shower before coming to the hospital. Check your chest for rashes or open wounds. If you have these, do not do skin-to-skin until your skin has healed.
 - **Do not smoke** or use perfume or scented lotions before doing skin-to-skin.
 - **Pump milk and use the toilet right before you start holding skin-to-skin.** You can pump while doing skin-to-skin if you're holding your baby for a long time. Ask your baby's nurse for help.
 - Let the nurse know when you're coming to hold so they can prepare for it. Plan to spend **at least 1 hour** doing skin-to-skin care.
 - Ask the nurse for a skin-to-skin wrap. You may also want to wear or bring a loose-fitting shirt or a jacket that opens in the front.
- * If your baby has a breathing tube, read and follow the instructions on page 3.**

Holding Skin-to-Skin

- You'll hold your baby at their bedside while sitting in a recliner. An adult bed can be brought in if needed. We provide curtains or screens for privacy.
- We recommend doing skin-to-skin care for at least **1 hour** each day, or as long as your baby is comfortable. Holding longer is better, but any amount of time is good. Try doing skin-to-skin as often as possible during your baby's hospital stay.
- Remove your bra and/or shirt, then put on the skin-to-skin wrap. You can wear an open-front shirt over the wrap to feel more comfortable. Your baby should only be dressed in a diaper and maybe a hat to stay warm.
- A nurse can help position your baby. Once they're on your bare chest, the nurse can help you secure your baby in the skin-to-skin wrap and cover them with a blanket. This will help keep your baby warm and in place.
- Make yourself comfortable in the recliner. Enjoy this special time with your baby. Let the nurse know if you need anything like pillows or a blanket.

- Avoid doing other things during skin-to-skin, like rocking, talking on the phone, or watching TV. This should be a quiet time to enjoy with your baby. You can help their brain grow by talking softly to them, singing, or reading to them.
- If you fall asleep holding your baby in the hospital, they will stay safe as long as you're wearing the skin-to-skin wrap. **However, you should never fall asleep while doing skin-to-skin with your baby at home.**

Skin-to-Skin for a Baby With a Breathing Tube

If your baby has a breathing tube, you must follow certain directions to keep them safe (Picture 2). The breathing tube is very important for helping them heal. Any time your baby is moved, there's a chance that the tube could move and cause breathing problems. Follow these directions:

- Ask your nurse before getting your baby in and out of bed. **The nurse and respiratory therapist are the only people who should move your baby.** It may take more staff to move your baby depending on what breathing machine and other devices they have.
- **Do not move your baby on your chest while holding. Call the nurse to help move them.**
- The nurse will check your baby's breathing tube often while holding. This is normal.
- **Do not put your baby back into bed.** The nurse and respiratory therapist will for you.



Picture 2 Skin-to-skin care for a baby with a breathing tube.

If you have any questions, ask your baby's nurse or doctor.

Notes
