

# Parents' Guide to Skin to Skin Contact: What you need to know

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We believe that all mothers and babies should have the opportunity, wherever possible, to enjoy skin to skin contact straight after birth.

Skin to skin contact is a fantastic way to bond with your baby. It's especially important if you intend to breastfeed, but regardless of your feeding intentions it will help your newborn adjust to his/her new surroundings, calm their breathing and keep them close and safe.

We don't just recommend skin to skin contact at delivery– it's a great way to calm and settle your baby and stimulate your milk supply at any time. Regardless of how your baby is born or how you intend to feed your baby, we will do our utmost to ensure that your baby gets the best start possible and help you to enjoy skin to skin contact safely and for as long as you would like.

### Benefits of Skin to Skin Contact

- It helps to regulate baby's temperature, breathing and heart rate
- It helps baby to maintain its blood sugar levels
- It minimises stress and separation anxiety in the newborn infant and has a calming effect on both you and your baby
- It helps to initiate breastfeeding and encourages your baby's instinct to feed and stimulates your own milk supply
- It promotes and supports responsive parenting as you get to know your baby and his/her feeding cues
- It passes the protection of your own skin bacteria onto your baby, providing extra protection and can be beneficial in reducing eczema and some allergies
- It can be beneficial in preventing postnatal depression and helps you and your baby to get to know each other

### What is Skin to Skin Contact?

Skin to skin contact is when the baby's skin is touching the mother's skin over the greater part of his/her body.

We encourage skin to skin contact as soon as your baby is born. Your baby will be quickly dried and placed naked onto your bare chest and then covered with a warm towel or blanket to help maintain their temperature. **We ask that you provide a hat for your baby to wear** immediately after birth to minimise heat loss through their head.

If you are expecting twins or triplets, skin to skin contact can be enjoyed with more than one baby at a time.

### Skin to Skin Contact and Caesarean Sections

It is still possible to enjoy skin to skin contact if your baby is born by Caesarean Section. This will depend on the medical condition of both of you, but as soon as you and your baby are stable, we will assist you to begin skin to skin contact.

If you require a general anaesthetic, then your birth partner can have skin to skin contact until you are awake and able to do so.

To support you in having skin to skin contact immediately after your Caesarean Section, **we suggest that you bring a stretchy vest top** with you to wear under your theatre gown during your procedure. This will make it easier for you to have skin to skin contact whilst your operation is being completed.


### **Skin to Skin Contact in the Neonatal Unit**

Skin to skin contact is known to be very beneficial to premature babies and if your baby needs to spend any time in the Neonatal Unit the staff will support you to enjoy skin to skin contact, wherever medically possible.

### **Partners and Skin to Skin Contact**

Ideally, to maximise the benefits, it would be advisable for mums to have skin to skin contact with their baby initially. But in cases where this is not possible, your birth partner would be encouraged to enjoy skin to skin contact and provide many of the benefits. This also helps to support the bonding process in the early days and weeks following delivery. It is a great way to settle your baby and be involved in his/her care.

**Skin to skin contact is not just beneficial at birth. You and your baby will also benefit from enjoying skin to skin contact in the days and weeks following delivery.**



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