



What can I do during skin to skin?

Relax and enjoy this special time with your baby. Talk to your baby or read a story or just enjoy this time quietly together.

How do I know if my baby likes it?

Your baby's behaviour will tell you. If your baby becomes less active and falls asleep this is a wonderful response and an important one too. The sleep in skin to skin care is very different from the sleep babies get in isolettes – it is deeper and more restful.

If your baby remains awake and searches for your face this is also important because it means they are aware of your presence and want to see you. Establishing contact cements bonding and builds self-esteem in your baby.

When should I stop?

When the baby becomes unsettled and squirms to be removed from skin to skin contact or becomes clinically unstable. Your nurse/midwife will help you to recognise the signs so you can tell for yourself.

Where can I find more information

miraclebabies.org.au

- > Parent and baby activities
- > Kangaroo Care

lilaussieprems.com.au

- > Articles
- > In NICU/SCN
- > Premmies and Kangaroo cuddles

bliss.org.uk

- > Help for families
- > In hospital
- > Skin to Skin and Kangaroo Care

Nurture book

- > Given to you by staff in NNU

Acknowledgment

- > Developmental Care Committee, Neonatal Nurseries, Women's and Children's Hospital
- > Susan Luddington-Hoe
Kangaroo Care for your baby (2005)
KanGuru LLC, Chargin Falls, USA

Women's & Children's Hospital

Skin to skin care for your baby



Information for parents
with sick or preterm babies



If you do not speak English,
request an interpreter from
Interpreter SA Health and the department
will make every effort to provide you with
an interpreter in your language.



www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons

© Department for Health and Ageing, Government of
South Australia. All rights reserved. Printed November 2014.
(Digital Media 6461 10/14)

Skin to skin care for your baby

Skin to skin care is a way of holding your baby using skin to skin and chest to chest close contact. This reunites you with your baby and enables both of you to develop strong bonds with each other.

Welcome to a special part of your baby's care. Skin to skin care is a part of your baby's care that only parents can do. It is special because when you do this for your baby, your baby is reminded of the environment of the womb and finds those things that are familiar from the womb reassuring and calming. When you hold your baby, your baby hears your heart beat, is gently rocked by your breathing movements, recognises your scent, is warmed by your body and is held snugly up against you. Babies are so calmed by the familiar environment that they usually go to sleep fairly soon after starting a skin to skin cuddle.

What are the benefits?

Skin to skin care has been tested with premature and fullterm neonates since 1983. More than 300 studies have been conducted and many benefits are reported. It helps babies breathe more regularly, maintain a regular heart rate, increase the amount of oxygen in the blood, decrease incidence of apnea, reduce infections, latch onto the breast readily and breast feed better, gain weight faster, sleep better, aid neurodevelopment and go home sooner. Skin to skin care may also increase mother's milk supply. Parents feel closer and more confident with their babies after skin to skin cuddles.

How soon can I start?

The Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) Neonatal Nurseries support skin to skin care for very small and very young babies. Babies on ventilators and babies having phototherapy are also able to experience skin to skin care.

Parents may need some time to feel ready for this first cuddle. Many adjustments and concerns accompany your baby being in the nurseries. When you feel ready to hold your baby in this very special way, then let your baby's nurse/midwife know.

The staff in the Neonatal Nurseries will talk with you about when the time is right for your baby to safely enjoy skin to skin. The right time is not based on your baby's weight or age. It is based on the medical condition of your baby. Don't forget to ask when it will be possible.

Who can do it?

Both mothers and fathers can enjoy skin to skin care with their baby.

How long for?

Generally each skin to skin cuddle should last for at least one hour as tolerated. With one hour of care the baby will receive the sleep benefits of skin to skin care and breast milk production may improve. Skin to skin care needs to be planned to suit parents, baby and staffing levels.

What should my baby wear?

Babies need to wear just a nappy and a hat. This enables the baby's chest to be skin to skin with the parent and helps the baby to keep warm.

Your baby's back should be covered by a blanket or wrap to keep them warm and protected from drafts.



What do I wear?

You need to wear a shirt that opens in the front and is big enough to close around your baby's back.

What is the best position?

Babies should be positioned upright on the chest or between the breasts. The best position for preterm infants in skin to skin care is to be nursed at a slightly reclined angle. Be sure that your babies knees are bent and kept beneath the blanket or wrap to help keep them warm. Hold your baby beneath their buttocks to keep them securely in place.

The nurse/midwife looking after your baby will assist you in getting set-up for skin to skin cuddles, finding a comfortable position and will be available to answer any of your questions.