

# Skin-to-skin Contact

The first hour of birth is a crucial time for your baby's transition to life outside the womb. To help with this adjustment, the Women's and Children's Health Program at Osler believes that all healthy, stable babies and mothers should be given the opportunity to practice Skin to Skin Contact practice immediately after delivery.

## What is skin-to-skin contact (SSC)?

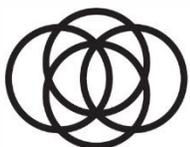
SSC is placing a naked newborn prone on the mother's bare chest immediately after birth. This practice based on intimate contact within the first hours of life will facilitate mother-infant behavior and interactions through sensory stimuli such as touch, warmth, and odour. All stable babies and mother could benefit from SSC immediately after birth, including those that do not intend to breastfeed. Babies who are not stable immediately after birth can receive skin-to-skin contact later when they are stable. In situations where the mother is not stable or able to respond to her baby, the baby can be put skin-to-skin with the father or partner.

With your consent to this practice, after delivery, including after caesarean section, your health care providers will ensure that there is uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact between you and your baby. Skin-to-skin contact may continue for at least one hour after birth or until completion of the first feeding, or as long as you wishes. A longer period of SSC is recommended if your baby has not suckled by one hour after birth.

For more information on SSC practice, please ask your nurse.

## What are the benefits?

- Calms the mother and the baby and helps to stabilize the baby's heartbeat and breathing.
- Keeps the baby warm with heat from the mother's body.
- Enables colonization of the baby's gut with the mother's normal body bacteria gut, provided that she is the first person that holds the baby and not the nurse or others.
- Reduces infant crying, thus reducing stress and energy.
- Facilitates bonding between the mother and her baby, as the baby is alert in the first one to two hours.
- Allows the baby to find the breast and self-attach, which is more likely to result in effective suckling than when the baby is separated from his/her mother in the first few hours
- Reduces the need for analgesia during invasive procedures for example vitamin K injection.
- Lose less weight
- Enhances mother infant interaction
- Extends duration of successful breastfeeding
- Hormonal interaction reduces risk of postnatal depression



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