

Caring for Your Child
Skin-to-Skin Care (Kangaroo Care)

What is Skin-to-Skin Care?

Skin-to-Skin Care is a special way of holding your baby. It is also called Kangaroo Care. It gets its name from the way a mother kangaroo carries her baby in her pouch. The NICU is a high-tech world with many things that separate you from your baby. Skin-to-Skin Care is a way for you to spend special time bonding with your baby. It is one of the best ways you can help your baby become more stable and grow. Skin-to-Skin Care can be done with both premature and full term infants.

What are the benefits of Skin-to-Skin?

Research has shown that Skin-to-Skin Care has many benefits for babies and parents:

- Premature babies gain weight faster
- Babies cry less and sleep better
- Babies' heart rates, breathing patterns, and temperature become more stable
- Premature babies come out of incubators and into cribs sooner
- Babies feed earlier and more successfully
- Skin-to-Skin Care promotes breastfeeding
- Milk production is increased in breastfeeding moms
- Skin-to-Skin Care helps infant/parent bonding
- Parents become more confident in caring for their baby
- Parents feel more important



How is Skin-to-Skin Care Done?

Both mothers and fathers can participate in Skin-to-Skin Care. Skin-to-Skin Care is easiest done when you wear a shirt that opens in the front. Mothers are encouraged to remove their bras. Babies wear only a diaper, and may wear a hat. The parents' shirt is opened and the baby is placed skin-to-skin against the parent's chest. The shirt and a blanket are then placed on top of the baby. Parents should not wear strong perfume or smoke before participating in Skin-to-Skin Care.

How will my baby react to Skin-to-Skin Care?

Your baby may take a few minutes to settle in and become stable. Your baby's nurse will monitor your baby's vital signs during the transition, and during Skin-to-Skin Care. Once settled, most babies become very comfortable and fall asleep. Although you may become very comfortable as well, it is important that you stay awake. Skin-to-Skin Care should be done for at least an hour or two.

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When can my baby participate in Skin-to-Skin Care?

Most NICU babies can participate in Skin-to-Skin Care, although there are some exceptions. Your baby's nurses can help you decide when Skin-to-Skin Care is right for your baby. If you are interested in enjoying this special "cuddle time" with your baby, please talk with your baby's nurses.

Please view our DVD on Skin-to-Skin Care. It is available in the NICU and the Family Library in The Connelly Resource Center for Families.

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