



Hôpital général juif  
Jewish General Hospital

## *Herzl Family Practice Centre, Goldfarb Breastfeeding Clinic*

### **Skin to skin and breastfeeding**

#### **Patient handout**

Newborns are programmed to seek skin to skin contact with their mother immediately after birth. Their mother's body can be considered their natural habitat. The touch of the mother's skin, her scent, her breathing and the movement of her chest orient the newborn and help the newborn adapt to his new environment outside of the uterus. This contact can optimize the newborn's innate reflexes to look for and latch onto the mother's breast.

Skin to skin is not just for newborns. Practicing skin to skin contact throughout the first three months of life or more, sometimes referred to as the fourth trimester, increases parental confidence, improves bonding between parent and infant and facilitates a deep latch and increased milk supply for breastfeeding.

#### **What is skin to skin contact?**

Skin to skin contact consists of placing a naked baby (with or without a diaper), on the bare chest of his mother, generally in a vertical position in between the mother's breasts.

Baby's exposed back can be covered with a blanket to minimize heat loss.

Baby may also be placed skin to skin in a baby carrier or a special shirt designed for baby-wearing.



*Photo credit: Karène Chevriot-Valladeau, IBCLC*

## **When can I place my baby skin to skin?**

It is recommended to place baby skin to skin directly after birth, whether baby was born vaginally or by cesarean section, for at least 2 hours or longer. This can also be done with premature babies, where mothers will “wear” their babies using a technique known as “Kangaroo Care”. Please speak to your health care professional for more information.

Skin to skin contact is **beneficial for all babies**, irrespective of their type of delivery, gestational age or type of nutrition.

Benefits of skin to skin contact have been shown when practiced for at least an hour 1-2 times a day for the first three months.

However, don’t let this limit you. In the first few weeks and months of baby’s life, you can continue to place your baby skin to skin as often and for as long as you wish.

## **What are the benefits of skin to skin contact?**

- Optimizes baby’s temperature, respiration, cardiac status and glucose level.
- Calms baby and reduces crying and energy expenditures.
- Helps mother bond and connect with her baby.
- Colonizes baby with the same bacteria as his mother, which can help with promotion of good health.
- Can help baby with pain control.

### **With breastfeeding :**

- Facilitates breastfeeding initiation and continuation.
- Increases likelihood that baby will latch on to mother’s breast.
- Supports increased milk production by increasing maternal prolactin levels.
- Encourages baby to breastfeed on demand.
- Can calm a baby down after certain procedures such as a frenotomy.

Sources :

[https://www.who.int/elena/titles/early\\_breastfeeding/fr/](https://www.who.int/elena/titles/early_breastfeeding/fr/)

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