

## **Prenatal Education: Topic #5: Early Skin To Skin Contact**

*Breastfeeding is the gift of a lifetime, a gift that only a mother can give.*



**“Hi Mom. I’m home!”**

● Those are words you’ll hear several years from now, but that is also the expression that best states your baby’s desire right after birth: to be next to you! You were his “home” for the past nine or so months; the place of warmth, feeding and comfort. The best way to bring baby back into this place of comfort and warmth with you is called “skin to skin.”

**What is “skin to skin”?**

- Simply put, the baby is placed bare-skinned onto your skin, on your chest.
- Any assessments or procedures that are done routinely for your baby can either be delayed for this important time together, or performed while the baby is on your chest.

**What will result from having “skin to skin” time?**

### ● **Happier Baby:**

Babies are comforted by being placed skin to skin with their mother right after birth. They are calmer and cry less. Being skin to skin is also pain-relieving to the baby, such as during an injection or heel-stick procedure.

### ● **Healthier Baby:**

When babies are placed skin to skin, they warm up better and learn to stay warm faster. Skin to skin helps baby’s respirations, heart rate, and blood sugar stay normal and their oxygen levels are highest when skin to skin. So you see, you are the best “recovery room” for your new baby!

### ● **Happier Mother:**

Being skin to skin helps lower your stress, and makes you feel closer to your baby. This is a great time for both of you to get to know one another. The bonding that takes place during skin to skin time lasts long after birth.

### ● **Healthier Mother:**

The movement of your baby’s body on your body stimulates hormones that cause your uterus to contract and therefore bleed less.

### ● **Better Breastfeeding:**

When babies are placed undisturbed on their mother’s chest, between the breasts, they often will crawl towards the mother’s nipple and latch on unassisted! Babies are able to smell the colostrum in their mother’s breasts. Since amniotic fluid is similar in smell to colostrum, babies are therefore naturally drawn to the breast. In addition, babies’ hand movements at the breast, as well as their sucking, cause the mother’s body to release milk-making hormones. Infants who have been placed skin to skin gain weight better and breastfeed better and longer. Babies need to be close to the breast to learn to breastfeed. This first skin to skin time is the best opportunity to begin breastfeeding!

**The Benefits Continue:**

- Even after your first skin to skin time, continue to place your baby skin to skin over the next several days. If baby is fussy, this will help calm him. If baby is too sleepy to nurse, this will stimulate and arouse him to breastfeed. Skin to skin time continues to help make baby warm and comforted. And it continues to help make breastfeeding a successful and enjoyable experience.