

# Skin to Skin with your Baby at Birth

August 2024

## What is skin to skin?

Skin to skin is when your naked baby is placed on your bare chest immediately or as soon as possible after birth. This can also be called kangaroo care.

## Benefits for your baby

- Normalises your baby's heart rate and breathing, helping adaptation to life outside the womb
- Keeps your baby warm, relaxed and calm
- Promotes a feeling of safety and bonding
- Stimulates digestion and an interest in feeding
- Stabilises blood sugar levels
- Introduces your friendly bacteria to your baby, promoting protection against infection

## Benefits for you

- Releases hormones to support breastfeeding and bonding
- Helps lower blood pressure and stress levels
- Reduces the risk of postpartum haemorrhage
- Reduces the risk of postnatal depression
- Helps shorten your recovery time

## Timing of skin to skin

Skin to skin should occur between mother and baby immediately, or as soon as possible after birth, and should be maintained for at least an hour.

The only time skin to skin won't be offered is if your baby or you are too unwell to do it or if you specifically request not to do it.

## Positioning

A calm and relaxed environment helps you feel comfortable and safe during skin to skin. Hold your baby against your body in a way that feels right for you. A reclined position may feel the most comfortable and secure. Position your baby's head with their cheek against your bare chest and their face visible.

## Involving both parents

Encouraging all non-birthing parents, including fathers, to have skin to skin with their baby is a valuable way to get them involved and encourage bonding. In situations where it is difficult for the you to have skin to skin, the father or non-birthing parent is the next best person to do it while you are unable.



*Skin to skin contact is an important time for a parent and their baby. Interruptions should be kept to a minimum during this time.*



**Date of Review: August 2024**

**Date of Next Review: August 2028**

**Consumer Participation National Standards endorsed**

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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