

“Skin to Skin Holding” to Breastfeeding in the NICU

We hope to help you hold your baby “Skin to Skin” as soon as you are both able.

- Your baby needs to be stable to be held. Babies on ventilators, CPAP and with IV lines and cables may still be held “Skin to Skin”, if stable enough.
- *Ask your baby’s RN or Medical Team if your baby is ready.*

We want you to watch our “Skin to Skin Holding” video to learn of the benefits.

- This video also shows you how to do a standing transfer. This is easier for babies with tubes and IV lines.
- *Ask your baby’s RN to set up this video for you to watch*

“Skin to Skin Holding”, also called Kangaroo Care has many benefits for babies.

- They are the right warmth and their heart rate is better when held next to their parent’s skin.
- Babies cry less and spend more time alert and quiet. Babies gain weight and spend more time in deep sleep than babies who are not held “Skin to Skin”.
- Your baby will release hormones that will help him to mature his brain and to breathe more easily.

Holding your baby “Skin to Skin” is healing for both Mom and Dad too.

- “Skin to Skin Holding” helps bring you back together as a family.
- Your baby will recognize your voice and smell.
- It may help you while you are sad and worried about being separated from your baby. Often the main reason moms have trouble sleeping, relaxing and making breastmilk is because you are not together.

You will release hormones for attachment, relaxation, and making breastmilk.

- As your baby becomes stable and grows he may then come to the pre-pumped or empty breast for Non-Nutritive or “Dry Breastfeeding”.
- To do this you pump your breasts just before you hold your baby “Skin to Skin”. Then bring your baby to the nipple and he begins with smelling and tasting.
- These are the early steps toward direct breastfeeding.

Once feedings begin, we encourage the first feeding to be at your breast.

- Direct breastfeeding often begins with “Skin to Skin Holding”.
- Your baby may not latch or transfer any milk at first.
- It is more important that your baby be allowed to lead the feeding. We encourage you to not be disappointed when your baby is sleepy or tired. Be patient, this is common.
- We encourage you to read your baby’s feeding cues during cares, handling and breastfeeding.

Your letdown of milk may not happen until your baby is stronger.

- Once your baby starts to take milk from your breast, how often you breastfeed may increase. Usually, babies that have been sick or separated from their Moms go home both breast and bottle feeding.
- We encourage you to obtain outpatient lactation support after discharge. Often, breastfeeding can be increased safely with assistance.

During “Skin to Skin Holding” and breastfeeding, you will be exposed to all the little microbes on your baby.

- Your body makes immune cells in your breastmilk to help your baby fight infection.
- Your breastmilk is made just for your baby who, for a time, lives here in the NICU.

Once your baby can be held “Skin to Skin”, we encourage you to do this every day or more, depending on your baby’s age and stability.

- Babies are more relaxed & sleep better on their parent’s chest than in an isolette or crib.
- ***“Skin to Skin Holding” is the best way to hold your baby.***

When you buy clothing for your baby, look for ones that open to the front.

- We have vests and t-shirts that open to the front for your baby to borrow and wear while here. This makes “Skin to Skin Holding” easy and less laundry for you.
- We also encourage Moms to wear front opening tops or clothing that is easy to open or change into our hospital gowns.

Once breastfeeding begins this is the perfect time to continue “Skin to Skin Holding”.

- It will help your baby to get closer to you and be more awake for feedings.
- Keep track of “Skin to Skin Holding”, Non-Nutritive and then Direct Breastfeeding in your pumping log.
- These steps will help you toward breastfeeding your baby and making enough breastmilk while your baby is here and once he is home.

“Skin to Skin Holding” is something only you can do, a gift you give yourself and your baby.