

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Skin-to-skin

What is skin to skin?

Skin-to-skin contact means holding your baby against your skin, usually under your top or under a blanket. When your baby is born, you will be encouraged to have skin-to-skin contact as soon as possible.

If your baby was born early or needed a little bit of extra support after birth they may need to spend some time on the Neonatal Unit. Skin-to-skin is a wonderful opportunity for you to be able to help your baby whilst they are on the Neonatal Unit which can also continue when you take your baby home.

There are lots of benefits to spending time in skin-to-skin with your baby and the nursing staff supporting you and your baby whilst they are on the Neonatal Unit will ask if you would like support to hold your baby in skin-to-skin.

How do I have skin to skin with my baby?

The nursing team on the Neonatal Unit can help you to transfer your baby from their incubator/ cot to you. You may be nervous about the monitoring wires or respiratory support that your baby may need, however, this shouldn't stop you from being able to have skin-to-skin together.

Get comfy in a chair that reclines. Have a drink and snacks close by so that you are settled and have what you might need close by.

Hold your baby close on your chest, your baby should have their nappy on and a blanket around them to keep them warm.

What are the benefits of skin-to-skin?

- Helps to create a bond between you and your baby.
- Helps to keep your baby warm and helps them to regulate their temperature.
- Helps to calm and soothe your baby if they are upset or unsettled.
- Can help to calm your baby for painful procedures such as when they need their blood taking.
- Helps your baby to sleep which will help them to grow.
- Helps to regulate your baby's heartbeat and breathing.
- Helps to increase your milk supply and stimulates your baby's feeding instincts.
- Releases the oxytocin hormone which is your body's natural feel good hormone.
- Helps to build your baby's immunity to infections by transferring protective bacteria from your skin to your baby.

Frequently asked questions

How long should I spend in skin-to-skin with my baby?

Skin-to-skin has so many benefits for both you and your baby. There is no limit to how long you can spend in skin-to-skin with your baby, there may be times when your baby needs to stay in their incubator or cot, however your nursing team can support you with other ways you can support your baby during these times.

Can my baby have a tube feed whilst in skin-to-skin?

Yes, in fact if you are hoping to breastfeed, holding your baby in skin-to-skin whilst they have a tube feed may help to increase your milk supply and help your baby to develop their feeding instincts.

Can my partner or older children have skin-to-skin too?

Yes, this will help to develop bonds between close family members and your baby. Children may need a little more help to ensure that they don't move about too much whilst they are enjoying their cuddles.

Are there any safety concerns whilst in skin-to-skin?

Remember to keep your baby upright whilst in skin-to-skin and ensure that you can see them at all times. Do not have any hot food or drinks whilst holding your baby. Ensure that you do not fall asleep whilst holding your baby.

If you have any further questions, please speak with the team supporting you and your baby who will be happy to talk through any questions you may have.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

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