

## Skin-to-Skin Contact Kangaroo Mother Care

- ◆ A baby in quiet sleep is left undisturbed if possible.
- ◆ When they start to wake up or wriggle, you can feed them.
- ◆ Change their nappy and spend time looking at your baby and talking to them.
- ◆ When they are awake the nurses can do the tests they need to do. Then wrap your baby in a supportive way so that they can sleep. It is important for your baby to go through a full sleep-wake cycle which is usually about 60 - 90 minutes as a minimum to get the benefits of skin-to-skin contact.
- ◆ As parents you can take it in turns to have your baby in skin-to-skin contact.
- ◆ The nurses can give you advice, and are there to support you and teach you according to the specific needs of your baby. The nurses will help you to transfer the baby onto your chest.

*Thank-you to Crystle  
and Marlie-Rose for  
being the champions  
of skin-to skin care*

**SCHN**

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## GRACE CENTRE FOR NEWBORN CARE

## Skin-to-Skin Contact / Cuddles



**Information for families**

## Questions you may have

### Why is skin-to-skin contact/cuddles important?

It is comforting for your baby to be close to you. Your baby already knows your scent and touch. Your voice and the rhythm of your breathing are soothing. Skin-to-skin contact is good for both you and your baby. Research has shown there are many benefits of skin-to-skin contact to your baby's on-going development and breastfeeding success.

### How do I have skin-to-skin contact/cuddles with my baby?

Ask your nurse to arrange for a recliner chair to be placed next to your baby's cot. You will need to wear a shirt that opens down the front. Your naked baby will be placed directly on your skin without any blanket or clothes between your chest and your baby. This allows your body heat to keep your baby warm. It works best if you place the baby between your breasts on your chest facing you. You can put a warm,

dry blanket on top of both of you. This helps keep that heat around both of you. If the room is cold, you may want to put a hat on your baby so there is less heat lost from your baby's head.

### When should skin-to-skin contact/start?

While your baby is in intensive care the nurses will help to move your baby to your chest and adjust all the wires and tubes. This will depend on how stable your baby is and their recovery from their operation. Skin-to-skin contact has the most benefits when you do it soon as possible following your baby's birth, but it is also good later on. Your partner or a close family member can also have skin-to-skin contact with the baby. This allows them a chance to bond with the baby further.

### What are some benefits of skin-to-skin contact?

- Skin-to-skin contact keeps your baby's temperature normal better than being wrapped in blankets or placed under a heating lamp.
- Skin-to-skin contact helps your baby's heart and breathing rate stay regular.
- Skin-to-skin contact helps your baby smell and find your nipple so breastfeeding starts easily and is more successful. Your body may also make more breast milk.
- Skin-to-skin contact lowers the levels of

stress hormones in your blood, which helps you bond with your baby.

- Skin-to-skin contact can help build your confidence about parenting and your ability to take care of your baby's needs.
- Your baby may spend more time sleeping longer or being quiet and awake and less time crying.
- If your baby is sick, skin-to-skin contact can help your baby heal.

### How long should I do skin-to-skin contact for?

There is no set times but it is recommended that you spend about one hour so your baby can settle into a nice comfortable sleep cycle.

### What are the risks of skin-to-skin contact?

If you and your baby are healthy there are no health risks from skin-to-skin contact. You will not be offered skin-to-skin if your baby remains in intensive care requiring a lot of medical treatment.

### How do I let my nurse know I want skin-to-skin contact?

Discussing your wishes with your nurse is an important step in communication. You can write your wishes on the parent plan in the front of the green folder and ask your nurse to write your wishes in your baby's clinical notes.