Skin-to-skin contact means having baby placed on mother’s bare chest and covered with a dry blanket. Contact should be immediately after birth and uninterrupted for at least 1 hour or until the first breastfeed.

**BABY’S FIRST HOUR**

- **SUCKLING.** About an hour after birth, baby opens his/her mouth wide, latches onto the nipple, and begins sucking. After the first breastfeed, both mother and baby are ready for a sleep.

- **THE BIRTH CRY** (0 minutes/birth) Babies journey begins with a loud cry announcing his/her arrival.

- **RELAXATION** (1-3 minutes) Placed skin-to-skin, baby will relax and there will be no mouth or hand movement.

- **FAMILIARIZATION** (45-60 minutes) After reaching the breast, baby spends time exploring the nipple by licking, touching, and massaging.

- **CRAWLING** (35-45 minutes) At 35 minutes of age, baby starts to seek out mother’s breast by making short pushing movements with his/her feet, lifting the upper torso, and bobbing his/her head.

- **RESTING** (anytime) Any time between the other stages, baby will have moments of resting and will resume their journey when they’re ready.

- **AWAKENING** (3-8 minutes) About 3 minutes after birth, baby will begin to make small head and mouth movements, and may open his/her eyes.

- **ACTIVITY** (8-35 minutes) As soon as 8 minutes after birth, baby will have increased mouthing, suckling, and rooting movements.

**BENEFITS**

- Baby is able to hear the mom’s heart beat and breathing, and smell and feel her skin, which is very comforting.

- Stabilizes baby’s vital signs – heart rate, breathing, blood sugar, body temperature.

- Promotes interaction and bonding with the baby.

- Decreases the level of stress hormones in mom and baby, which results in a calmer baby who cries less.

- Increases mom’s confidence and relaxation, which helps stimulate milk production and let down.

- Promotes earlier establishment of a proper latch and feeding, which means that mom is less likely to have sore nipples and baby will get more milk.

- Babies are more likely to breastfeed exclusively.

**ROUTINE PRACTICE**

The first hour can’t be repeated.

There can be delayed:

- Vitamin K injection
- Erythromycin eye drops
- Weight

Routine monitoring and observations can be done on mother’s chest after vaginal or caesarean birth.

100% of full term babies benefit from immediate skin-to-skin contact.

*normal newborn behaviours in the first hour may be impacted by medical interventions during labour and birth

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