

Ann-Marie Widstrom believes that if a baby is put skin to skin on the mother's chest immediately after birth, *without a delay* for routine procedures, and left there *undisturbed* as he goes through the nine instinctive stages at *his pace*, that the likelihood of *breastfeeding success* is greatly enhanced! However, whether you want to breastfeed or not, put baby skin to skin as there is just so much more than breastfeeding that goes with skin to skin.

Leave baby skin to skin on mom's chest undisturbed. Don't cover up the baby's smell by putting on a beanie as this smell helps mom's body to secrete a rush of Oxytocin – the love hormone. It is also important for mom and baby to smell each other as they are biologically primed to recognise the scent of their mother and vice versa.

Skin to skin has remarkable clinical effects for the baby

The biggest problem for a newborn is separation. The universal response to separation is the protest-despair response. Protest – intense activity with baby crying and arms and legs flailing – “I have to get back to my mother to find warmth, food and protection”. If this fails, and separation continues baby will go into despair and a massive increase in stress hormones will be secreted that causes a decrease in temperature and heart rate as baby's body goes into survival mode for long term survival. Baby belongs on mom's chest. The temperature on the chest of a new mother is 1 degree hotter than any other woman. This new mom is able to increase her chest temperature by 2 degrees and lower it by 1 degree in order to respond to her baby's needs of being too hot or too cold. From a baby's perspective, separation is life threatening. The experience of a baby being separated from its mother, is worse for the baby than a heroin addict going cold turkey. It experiences a physical and psychological withdrawal from a host of sensory stimuli. Babies that are separated from their mothers have 10x the number of cries and 40x the duration of crying. Babies are not meant to cry. They are meant to be skin to skin with mom and so have every need met by being there.

Brain development

The human brain of a newborn is 25% the size it will be in adulthood. The amygdala is in a critical period of maturation in the first 2 months after birth. The amygdala is located deep in the centre of the brain and is involved in emotional learning and memory modulation. Skin to skin activates the amygdala and contributes to the maturation of this vital brain structure. Early baby experiences may shape the brain structure and function. A traumatic hostile environment (separation from mom) would design a brain for caution and defence, whereas a supportive

environment (mom and baby skin to skin) designs a brain to grow and thrive.

Skin to skin at birth and beyond

Baby should remain skin to skin with mom or dad for the first 3 to 4 months of life as much as possible. What we mean when we talk about skin to skin is that baby is placed undressed (just with a nappy on) directly against mom's bare chest. A shirt wrap is then put on covering both mom and baby and keeping them securely together.

The connected baby

- Babies are connected at birth. They are able to communicate
- At birth babies brains are paying attention to the movements and facial expressions of whoever is holding them
- Mom and baby gaze at each other = they are connecting
- This connection forms motorways in the brain, increasing brain development
- Newborn babies have the ability to mimic and copy your facial expressions
- Human brains develop after birth – they are shaped by what happens to a person
- Connecting is when brains are laying down neural pathways that will help them handle emotions throughout life
- Stop connecting with your phone and connect with your baby – you will be amazed at their capabilities and their need and desire to connect with you

How the sponsors tie in with skin to skin

Huggies – When babies are skin to skin with mom, they wear nothing but a nappy.

SnuggleRoo – Baby carrier to hold baby in place on mom or dad's chest. It looks like a wrap ... but even better.

Baby City – Where all these products can be bought from.

Expectant Mothers Guide – Information for you to support you through your pregnancy up until your baby is 2 years of age.

To find out more about skin to skin and how to put it into action, attend childbirth education classes and read on www.expectantmothersguide.co.za or download the ExpectantMothersGuide App from the AppStore or GooglePlay. You can even download podcasts or MP3 to listen to while you are travelling.



EXPECTANT
mothers guide



Skin To Skin

for all moms and babies
at birth and beyond





The power of first impressions

What the newborn first experiences as it exits his mother's womb will colour his perception of life and affect him forever as to whether he sees the world as difficult or easy, frightening or reassuring, cold and lonely or warm and welcoming.

This time immediately after birth is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and should not be interrupted unless medically necessary. This time – the golden hour or sacred hour should be cherished, honoured and protected. Birth is a time when a new family member is welcomed into the arms of his parents and given the time to adjust to his new world outside of the womb in the loving arms of mom and dad.

For nine months, the uterus is the place where the developing foetus is warmed, nourished, loved and protected. At birth, a new place must be found that will take over from the uterus. This new special place is skin to skin on the mother's chest between her breasts – here her baby will be loved, secure, protected, warmed and nourished.

Gut microbiome formation

Through the process of birth, baby becomes exposed to the healthy microorganisms from mom. As baby passes through the vaginal canal being covered by vaginal secretions, baby swallows this fluid and his sterile gut becomes rapidly colonised with microorganisms. Colonisation patterns are affected by the type of birth and feeding methods of the baby and what he is exposed to immediately at birth. In a vaginal birth, the baby's microbes are obtained from the mom's vaginal and faecal flora and then from the mom's skin and breasts as he is placed skin to skin with the mom and suckles on the breast. These are the good bacteria that we need to have a healthy and efficient immune system. We are full

of healthy microbes. The gut is the most important part of the immune system. We have approximately 1,5kg of healthy microbes in our body.

In a caesarean birth the baby is more exposed to hospital bacteria than any good bacteria from the mom. Because of the microorganisms obtained when you have a caesarean – your baby is 26% more likely to be obese than if it were born vaginally. So, it becomes very important for your baby to be placed skin to skin immediately with the mom while in theatre. If this is not possible, let dad have the baby skin to skin with him. Probiotics become even more essential to help establish this good gut microbiome. Vaginal seeding can also be an advantage.

Nine instinctive stages

Based on the research of Ann-Marie Widstrom, a Swedish researcher on skin to skin contact between mom and baby at birth, there are nine observable newborn stages in the first hour or two after birth when a baby is placed immediately skin to skin with his mother. These are innate and instinctive to the baby.

Stage 1 – The birth cry

The distinctive cry occurs immediately after birth as the baby's lungs expand. It is the most glorious sound imaginable as it confirms your baby is alive and well!

Stage 2 – Relaxation

The baby is placed skin to skin with his mother. The newborn's hands are relaxed. It is as though baby is taking a deep breath after this unusual experience of labour and birth. "Whew that was quite something to experience!"

Stage 3 – Awakening

The newborn exhibits small thrusts of movement in the head and shoulders. This occurs about 3 minutes after birth. He is feeling the wide spaces around him, no longer tightly confined in the vagina but free to stretch.

Stage 4 – Activity

The newborn begins to make increased mouthing and sucking movements as he starts to explore his environment with his mouth. He has more stable eye movements now and looks at the breast and then looks at his mother. The dark areola around the nipple attracts him to the nipple area where his sustenance will come from. All of these movements increasing the release of oxytocin in his mother's body and preparing her body for bonding and breastfeeding.

Stage 5 – Rest

The baby may have periods of rest between the activity during the first couple of hours after birth. This resting time does NOT mean baby is disinterested in the breast and needs help latching. Just let him be and he will continue in his own time. Don't rush him. Enjoy this time together. Let baby go through these stages at his pace.

Stage 6 – Crawling

Baby "crawls" using sliding, pushing, leaping and crawling movements to reach the breast and nipple. These are short periods of action around 35 minutes after birth.

Stage 7 – Familiarisation

Baby becomes acquainted with the nipple by licking the nipple and touching and massaging the breast. This begins about 45 minutes after birth and can last 20 minutes or more. Baby makes sounds to get mom's attention. He looks at the other people in the room, familiarising himself with his new environment. Baby moves in a purposeful manner. Be peaceful and unhurried and watch the amazing happenings as baby finds the breast and will soon latch and suckle without assistance or interference. Don't try to latch the baby – he is not ready just yet. His tongue is flat and high in the roof of his mouth, whereas just prior to self-attaching, the baby cups the tongue and drops it while opening the mouth wide for a deep and effective latch. Be on baby time not on hospital, doctor or nurse time.

Stage 8 – Suckling

The newborn takes the nipple, self-attaches and suckles. This usually begins about an hour or so after birth. If the mother has had analgesia or anaesthesia during labour, it may take a while longer for baby to complete these stages.

Stage 9 – Sleep

The baby and probably mom as well will fall into a restful sleep together.

