

Information for Patients

Skin to skin contact results in a calm, warm baby and a relaxed mother

Saint Mary's encourages ALL mothers to hold their baby in skin contact after the birth, for as long as they want.

After the birth, your baby will be gently dried, then laid against your chest. It would help to wear something loose, or with a front opening. Both you and your baby will be covered with a sheet or blanket. This is a very special time for you to get to know your new family member. The staff will not interrupt it with unnecessary procedures. Your midwife will be nearby if help is needed.

If either mother or baby is unwell, skin contact can start as soon as both are able.

Premature babies will also benefit from skin contact as soon as their condition is stable.

Skin contact helps calm unsettled babies day or night, in hospital or at home, not just after the birth.



Why early skin to skin contact is important:

1. Helps strengthen bonding.
2. Helps keep your baby warm.
3. Helps raise your baby's blood sugar.
4. Helps keep your baby calm and comforted – regulating your baby's breathing and heart rate.
5. Your baby will cry less.
6. Helps get both baby and mother ready for the first feed.

Why giving an early breastfeed is important:

The first milk produced is called colostrum. It is a yellow, sticky milk, which contains high levels of protein, vitamins and minerals in a very concentrated form. It is also very rich in antibodies which fight infections such as ear infections, chest infections, gastrointestinal infections and urine infections. Every feed of colostrum is valuable for both baby and mother. If you choose to bottle feed you can feed your baby in skin to skin.

For your baby:

- Breastmilk is uniquely produced by mothers for their own baby.
- Antibodies help protect your baby from infection.
- Colostrum helps clear the gut of meconium (baby's first black, tar-like stools) which helps to prevent jaundice developing.
- Helps maintain a healthy lining to the gut.

For you:

When your baby breastfeeds, hormones are released which have many beneficial effects:

- They cause your womb to contract and expel the placenta or 'afterbirth'. (Later, breastfeeds encourage the womb to contract and return to its pre-pregnancy state).
- They minimise the blood loss after delivery and reduce the risk of very heavy bleeding (postpartum haemorrhage).
- They have a relaxing effect and help mothers rest after the birth.
- Early feeding is reassuring to the mothers, as babies often feel sleepier in the first 24 hours.

If you have any questions about this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact your midwife.