

You and your baby after birth

In the first few hours after birth, having uninterrupted skin to skin with your baby will help them to go through some important developmental stages:

Stage 9: Sleep

About 1½ to 2 hours after birth, baby and sometimes the mother fall into a restful sleep.

Stage 1: The Birth Cry

A distinctive cry immediately after birth as the baby's lungs expand.

Stage 8: Suckling

Usually about an hour after birth, the baby self attaches onto mothers breast and suckles. If the mother has had pain relief during labour it may take more time to begin.

Stage 2: Relaxation

After the birth cry your baby will relax, showing no mouth movements and relaxing their hands. Baby is happiest skin to skin with mother, with mother and baby covered by a warm towel.

Stage 7: Familiarization

The familiarisation stage usually begins around 45 minutes after birth and could last for 20 minutes or more. The newborn will get to know the mother by licking the nipple and touching and massaging her breast.



Stage 3: Awakening

Awakening usually begins about 3 minutes after birth, when the newborn will make small movements of the head and shoulders. Some babies open their eyes and move their mouth too.

Stage 6: Crawling

Your baby will approach the breast, by short periods of a 'crawling' action, eventually reaching the breast and nipple. This stage usually begins about 35 minutes after birth.

Stage 5: Rest

Your baby may have resting periods any time during the first hour or so after birth.

Stage 4: Activity

During this stage, which usually begins about 8 minutes after birth, your baby will begin 'rooting' - making more noticeable mouthing and sucking movements.

Time...

If these stages are interrupted the baby will need to go back to the beginning and may fall asleep before they begin suckling.

And at the same time, skin to skin will...

- Regulate baby's heartbeat - calming and soothing
- Regulate baby's temperature – keeps baby nice and warm
- Regulate baby's breathing - calming and settling
- Encourage feeding –stimulates a baby's natural urge to feed, whether breast or bottle fed
- Help baby to feel safe, secure and close to their parent – with the smells, sounds and sensations they're familiar with
- Reduce stress – releasing calming hormones and comforting when upset
- Help you and your baby to get to know each other – developing the relationship between parent and baby
- Helps baby to feel more contented. Far from 'spoiling' baby, a baby held and cuddled often tends to be more settled and less "clingy".