



The Magical Time

Did You Know...

Most infants are in a quiet alert state from birth to 2 hours, then fall in and out of light and deep sleep until approximately 24 hours of age.

The First Hour

A F T E R B I R T H

A Baby's Nine Instinctive Stages

The first hours after birth are a developmentally distinct time for a baby and there are well documented short and long term physical and psychological advantages when a baby is held skin-to-skin during this time.



When a baby is in skin-to-skin contact after birth, there are nine observable newborn stages that happen in a specific order and are innate and instinctive for the baby. Within each of these stages, there are a variety of actions the baby may demonstrate.

Stage 1: *The Birth Cry*

This distinctive cry occurs immediately after birth as the baby's lungs expand but usually ends quickly when the baby is placed onto the mother's chest.

Stage 2: *Relaxation*

The newborn is relaxed and exhibits no movement. This stage usually begins when the birth cry has stopped.

Stage 3: *Awakening*

The newborn may exhibit head movements, open his eyes, show some mouth activity and might move his shoulders. This stage usually begins about 3 minutes after birth.

Stage 4: *Activity*

The newborn begins to make increased mouthing and sucking movements as the rooting reflex becomes more obvious. This stage usually begins about 8 minutes after birth.



Stage 5: *Rest*

At any point, the baby may rest. The baby may have periods of resting between periods of activity throughout the first hour or so after birth.

Stage 6: *Crawling*

The baby approaches the breast with short periods of action that result in reaching the breast and nipple. This stage usually begins about 35 minutes after birth.

Stage 7: *Familiarization*

The newborn becomes acquainted with the mother by licking the nipple and touching and massaging her breast. This stage usually begins around 45 minutes after birth and could last for 20 minutes or more.

Stage 8: *Suckling*

The newborn takes the nipple, self-attaches and suckles. This early experience of learning to breastfeed usually begins about an hour after birth. If the mother has had analgesia/anesthesia during labor, it may take more time with skin-to-skin for the baby to complete the stages and begin suckling.

Stage 9: *Sleep*

The final stage is sleep. The baby and sometimes the mother fall into a restful sleep. Babies usually fall asleep about 1½ to 2 hours after birth.

It is imperative to offer the breast within the first 30-60 minutes after birth, before the infant is too sleepy and the opportunity is missed, unless the medical condition of mother or infant indicates otherwise.

According to American Academy of Pediatrics / American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAP/ACOG) 2006, early nursing in the delivery room is associated with a marked increase in the percentage of mothers who continue breastfeeding at 2 to 4 months postpartum compared with initiation of nursing 2 hours after birth.

Benefits of Skin-to-Skin Care

SKIN-TO-SKIN CONTACT

Skin-to-skin contact is defined as holding an infant naked and unswaddled, belly down directly against the mother's bare chest.

AFTER DELIVERY

As soon as your baby is born your nurse will quickly dry him, put on a hat, settle him on your chest, and cover you both with warm blankets. He will remain there for the 1st hour of life and through the first feeding. Any assessments or routine newborn procedures may be performed while your baby is on your chest, but most often they will be delayed until after this important time together.

A SMOOTH TRANSITION

Your chest is the best place for your baby to transition from life inside the womb to life outside the womb. In the womb he was provided with warmth, protection, security, and nutrition. He is provided with these same things after birth when placed skin-to-skin with you. Your body is your baby's "natural habitat." All mammals grow better and develop better in their natural habitat.

BENEFITS TO NEWBORN

- Calmer and cry less
- Reduced discomfort during painful procedures
- Stabilizes temperature, heart rate, and breathing
- Oxygen levels are higher
- Maintains higher and more stable blood sugar levels
- Early stimulation of the immune system
- Breastfeeds better and sooner after delivery
- More likely to exclusively breastfeed and for a longer duration

BENEFITS TO MOTHER

- Beneficial for all feeding methods
- Decreases maternal anxiety
- Increases maternal affection and bonding
- Builds confidence in infant care
- Stimulates the hormones needed to produce milk
- Recognizes more quickly when infant is ready to feed

THE BENEFITS CONTINUE

- Even after your first experience of skin-to-skin time, continue to place your baby skin-to-skin
- If your baby is fussy, this will help to make him calm
- If baby is too sleepy to nurse, this will help stimulate and arouse him to breastfeed
- Skin-to-skin continues to help make your baby warm and comforted

What to do when your baby is a *night owl*



About sleeping babies

Immediately after birth your newborn will most likely be awake and alert for 1-2 hours. After that, expect your baby to fall in and out of light and deep sleep for approximately 24 hours as baby recovers from delivery.

During the second and third night your baby may wake and cry more often and appear constantly hungry. This behavior is normal for both breast-fed and formula-fed babies.

Newborns cry more during the night to make sure they receive adequate care and nutrition during a time when their mothers and caregivers are sleepy. (Aren't our babies smart?!)

You make more prolactin (the milk-making hormone) at night, especially in the wee hours of the morning. Babies often want to nurse at night because quite simply, there is more milk at night!

If your newborn exhibits hunger cues (sucking motions, hand to mouth, rooting, sticking out tongue, lip-smacking), then latch your baby on to breastfeed. Please do not hesitate to call if you need assistance.

If your newborn just completed a great feeding and still seems unsettled, then try the soothing techniques listed to the right.

How to soothe your baby

- Babies miss the womb:
 - Put your baby skin-to-skin with you. (Bare chest to bare chest) The warmth of your body and sound of your heartbeat will help to calm him.
 - Place a blanket over both of you and make sure his mouth and nose are uncovered.
 - If he still fusses, try applying gentle pressure with your hands over his bottom and upper back. This containment touch will make him feel more secure.
- Snuggle your baby in your arms with him positioned on his side. When your baby is upset, holding him on his back can make him more upset. However, babies should always be placed on their backs to sleep to help protect against SIDS.
- Try breastfeeding your baby. Sucking causes endorphins or "feel-good" hormones to be released in babies' brains.