

# The Best Start: Skin-to-Skin Contact and Breastfeeding



Inova Women's Hospital





## The Benefits of Skin-to-Skin Contact

At Inova, we believe that all mothers and babies should have the opportunity, whenever possible, to enjoy skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth. This is a fantastic way to bond with your baby. It's especially important if you intend to breastfeed, but regardless of your feeding intentions, it will help your newborn baby adjust to new surroundings, calm your infant's breathing and keep your baby close and safe. Skin-to-skin contact is a great way to calm and settle your baby and stimulate your milk supply in the early weeks of life.

### What is Skin-to-Skin Contact?

We try to initiate skin-to-skin contact as soon as your baby is born. Your baby will be quickly dried and placed onto your chest and then covered with a warm towel or blanket to keep warm. We also provide your baby with a hat to minimize heat loss through the head. Skin-to-skin contact is encouraged with all methods of delivery, as well as with multiple births.

## Benefits of Skin-to-Skin Contact:

- Helps regulate your baby's temperature
- Helps maintain your baby's blood sugar levels
- Helps calm your baby's breathing and heart rate
- Helps your baby recover from labor and delivery
- Minimizes stress and separation anxiety in your baby
- Helps your baby cry less
- Helps initiate breastfeeding and your baby's instinct to breastfeed
- Stimulates your own milk supply
- Passes the protection of your own skin bacteria onto your baby
- Helps you and your baby get to know each other and may help prevent postpartum depression

## Skin-to-Skin and Cesarean Sections

It is still possible to enjoy skin-to-skin contact if your baby is born by cesarean section. This will depend on the medical condition of both of you, but as soon as you and your baby are stable, we will assist you in beginning skin-to-skin contact. If you are awake for your operation, we will begin skin-to-skin contact as soon as your baby is born. If you require a general anesthetic, then your birth partner can perform skin-to-skin contact until you are awake and able to do so.

## Partners and Skin-to-Skin Contact

We encourage your birth partner to also experience skin-to-skin contact. This helps to support the bonding process, and in the days and weeks following delivery may help to settle your baby and allow you time to rest.

At Inova, we strive to ensure that your baby has the best start possible in life, and we encourage you to enjoy skin-to-skin contact safely and for as long as you would like.



*Virtually all mothers can breastfeed, provided they have accurate information, and the support of their family, the health care system and society at large. Breast milk is the perfect food for the newborn, and feeding should be initiated within the first hour after birth.*

*– The World Health Organization*

## Breastfeeding Your Baby

Experts agree that breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby. It creates a bond between you and your baby and provides the best nutrition for your infant. Breast milk is nature's perfect baby food. Your milk has just the right nutrients, in the right amount, to nourish your baby fully. It also helps your baby's brain and body grow.

Breastfeeding a baby exclusively for the first six months, and then continued breastfeeding in addition to appropriate solid foods until 12 months and beyond, has health benefits for both you and your baby.

### Breastfeeding is best for baby:

- Colostrum, known as “liquid gold,” is concentrated nutrition that your body produces during pregnancy. It is ready at birth and helps your newborn's digestive system grow and function.
- Colostrum and breast milk have antibodies that help your baby's immune system fight off illnesses immediately and in the future.
- The protein and fat in breast milk are better used by the baby's body than the protein and fat in formula.
- Breast milk is more easily digested than formula is.
- Breastfed babies have less gas and fewer problems with feeding, colic and constipation than babies who are fed with formula do.

### Breastfeeding is good for mothers:

- It is convenient – the baby's food is always available and at the right temperature.
- When you breastfeed, the hormone oxytocin is released. This allows your uterus to contract and return to its normal size, and reduces bleeding after delivery.
- It may decrease the risk of some cancers and illnesses in the future.
- Breast milk is environmentally friendly. It has no waste products and leaves no carbon footprint.
- Breast milk is free.

At Inova, we are committed to providing you with the best breastfeeding support possible. Our experienced lactation consultants, nurses and support personnel are available at all times during your hospital stay and beyond to best support your goal of breastfeeding.

To assist you in breastfeeding, we are pleased to provide 24-hour lactation support through our experienced lactation consultants and nursing staff. In addition, Inova Women's Hospital houses a boutique that carries a full range of products to assist you with breastfeeding. The boutique is located in the main lobby of Inova Women's Hospital, just past the Antenatal Testing Center.

### Lactation Services:

- Inpatient consultations: Daily on postpartum units
- Outpatient consultations: Monday – Friday by appointment
- Lactation Warm Line: Breastfeeding support via phone.  
Leave a message at **703.776.4402**.
- Women's Boutique: Monday – Friday: . . . . 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
**Temporarily closed.** Saturday: . . . . . 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

For additional information about the boutique, breast pump rentals or outpatient scheduling, please call **703.776.6455**.