

HER HEALTH

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Bonding with baby at birth and postpartum: *A midwife's perspective*

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Welcoming a new baby into the world is an exciting time for parents. Often times, new parents may feel uncertain on how to best bond with their baby. The tips given in this article are applicable both in the hospital and at home.

As midwives, we are strong advocates for early mother and baby bonding. This includes immediate skin to skin after delivery, if medically safe. Skin to skin means placing the baby directly onto the mother's bare chest in an upright position, with the baby's head turned to the side for easy breathing, and blankets placed over the baby's body. This helps promote breastfeeding while also keeping baby's temperature, heart rate, and breathing regulated. Additionally skin to skin lowers the level of stress hormones, soothing both mother and baby. Other family members and parents can use skin to skin to bond with the baby as well.

Rooming-in is another way to bond with your baby. Rooming-in allows the family and newborn to become familiar with one another. Additionally, when mother and baby are sharing a room, the baby will often cry less, be soothed easily, and breastfeed more frequently. To practice rooming-in safely, baby should have their own crib or bassinet to sleep in and be within arm's reach of the mother. Rooming-in reduces the risk of SIDS and actually allows both mother and baby to sleep better.

Finally, encouraging breastfeeding as often and for as long as possible is another way for mothers to bond with their babies. Exclusively breastfeeding is recommended until baby is six months old. Breastfeeding has many benefits such as strengthening the baby's immune system and reducing the baby's risk of obesity, asthma, allergies, and diabetes. Breastfeeding also has benefits to mom as well, including reducing the risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

There are so many wonderful ways to bond with your baby. As Midwives, one of our greatest roles is helping new moms with this transition and supporting them with whatever they need.

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