

Healthy Attachment and Bonding

Establishing a connected family



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Take time off and enjoy your “babymoon” – a time when parents can get to know their new baby and rest together as a family. Keep your baby skin-to-skin as often as possible the first few weeks. Research confirms that skin-to-skin with a newborn aids milk production, helps baby cry less, reduces maternal stress and anxiety, improves your baby’s emotional and developmental health, and builds trust between you and your little one.

“Bonding is the establishment of the parent/child relationship immediately following the birth and an innate desire to be with and care for one’s baby”

-Robin Lim

How To Facilitate Attachment:

- Facilitate touch and bonding (skin-to-skin) between the newborn and mother in the immediate postpartum
- Encourage partner and siblings to hold baby skin-to-skin
- Support and encourage breastfeeding efforts
- Provide a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere for birth and postpartum
- Consider enlisting practical help in the postpartum period
- Discuss bonding goals with your midwife
- Wear your baby during the day and on outings
- Practice skin-to-skin with baby as often as possible in the first several months
- Bathe with your baby
- Sing to your baby
- Talk to your baby
- Massage/touch your baby

Get a jumpstart on bonding! Check out the book Bonding With Your Baby In Utero, by Maria Carella from our lending library

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From the Experts – Dr. Sears & Dr. Jack Newman

“Suppose parents, for fear of spoiling their baby or letting her manipulate them, restrain themselves from responding to her cries and develop a more distant, low-touch style of parenting. What happens then? The baby must either cry harder and more disturbingly to get her needs met or give up and withdraw. In either case, she finds that her caregiving world is not responsive. Eventually, since her cues are not responded to, she learns not to give cues. She senses something is missing in her life. She becomes angry and either outwardly hostile or withdrawn. In the first case, the baby is not very nice to be around, and parents find ways to avoid her. In the second case, the baby is harder to connect with, and again, parents and child enjoy each other less. Either way, this child will be difficult to discipline. She comes to believe that safety and security depend on no one but herself. Problems in relationships develop when a child grows up thinking she only has herself to trust in. Since the parents don't allow themselves to respond intuitively to their baby's cues, they become less sensitive and lose confidence in their parenting skills, another set-up for discipline problems.”

Dr. Sears, MD
The Unconnected Child



“There are now a multitude of studies that show that mothers and babies should be together, skin to skin (baby naked, not wrapped in a blanket) immediately after birth, as well as later. The baby is happier, the baby's temperature is more stable and more normal, the baby's heart and breathing rates are more stable and more normal, and the baby's blood sugar is more elevated. Not only that, skin to skin contact immediately after birth allows the baby to be colonized by the same bacteria as the mother. This, plus breastfeeding, are thought to be important in the prevention of allergic diseases. When a baby is put into an incubator, his skin and gut are often colonized by bacteria different from his mother's”

Dr. Jack Newman, MD
The Importance of Skin to Skin Contact

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Breastfeeding and/or safe bed-sharing are two ways to facilitate family bonding and attachment.

Consider This...

- Research continues to uncover the value and necessity of bonding in the immediate postpartum
- Fathers/Partners benefit from bonding and being present at the birth
- Bonding begins prenatally
- Survival of the newborn depends on human attachment
- Stress interferes with the bonding process
- Certain medications given during labor can inhibit bonding
- Breastfeeding facilitates bonding, and bonding facilitates breastfeeding
- Skin-to-skin facilitates bonding
- Ceremonies and rituals after the birth help the bonding process for families
- Attachment has positive lifelong effects