

STEP 4: Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth.

Place babies in skin-to-skin contact with their mothers immediately following birth for at least an hour and encourage mothers to recognize when their babies are ready to breastfeed, offering help if needed.

Recommendations

Ensure that all mothers who deliver vaginally are given their babies to hold with uninterrupted and continuous skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth and allowed to remain there together until completion of the first feeding (or for at least one hour if not breastfeeding) unless there are medically justifiable reasons for delayed contact.

Ensure that mothers who have had cesarean deliveries are given their babies to hold with uninterrupted and continuous skin-to-skin contact within 5 minutes after they are able to respond to their babies, and allowed to remain there together until completion of the first feeding (or for at least one hour if not breastfeeding) unless there are medically justifiable reasons for delayed contact.

Perform all routine procedures (e.g., assessments, Apgars) with the baby in skin-to-skin contact with the mother. Delay all routine procedures that require separation from the mother (e.g., bathing) until after this initial period of skin-to-skin contact and perform procedures at the mother's bedside, whenever possible.

Ensure that all mothers receive instruction on how to recognize signs that their baby is ready to feed and are encouraged to feed their baby upon identification of these cues.

Ensure that all mothers receive assistance with initiating breastfeeding during this first hour.

In the event of medically indicated separation, ensure that skin-to-skin contact is initiated as soon as mothers and infants are reunited. Encourage mothers to remain in skin-to-skin contact together with their infant thereafter, whenever possible.

