

Sudden Unexpected Postnatal Collapse (SUPC)

In the first few hours and days of your baby's life, bonding through skin-to-skin contact has many benefits. Skin-to-skin contact can help your baby adjust to life outside the womb, regulate their vital signs, and make breastfeeding easier, if you intend to do so.

Both moms and dads can practice skin-to-skin. It helps build a bond with your baby.

When practicing skin-to-skin, it's important to watch your baby closely. Sometimes a healthy baby can have trouble breathing or accidentally suffocate if they move into the wrong position where their airway is blocked. When an otherwise healthy baby has a sudden loss of breathing and heart function, it's known as a sudden unexpected postnatal collapse. While rare, it can be devastating. It can cause serious injury and even death.

Sudden unexpected postnatal collapse usually happens close to birth, usually within a few hours. But it can happen up to a week after your baby is born.

While the reasons for sudden unexpected postnatal collapse are not fully understood, we know that close newborn monitoring and safe positioning can help prevent it.

So you and your baby will be watched closely after birth. And you will be taught how to safely position your baby during skin-to-skin and while breastfeeding.

Follow these tips to help keep your baby safe during skin-to-skin contact: Sit slightly upright at a 45-degree angle with your baby's shoulders and chest facing you. Turn their head to the side, so you can see their face. Make sure your baby's chin is not touching their chest. Their legs should be flexed and their back should be covered with a blanket.

Keep a close eye on your baby at all times. Make sure the room is well lit. Watch for any changes in your baby's color, temperature, or breathing. Avoid distractions during skin-to-skin contact and while breastfeeding. For instance, don't use your phone.

Speak up if you aren't sure about your baby's position or their condition. Healthcare providers are on hand to help. And ask for help watching your baby if you feel sleepy.

Skin-to-skin contact is very good for you and your baby's health. So don't pass it up. But make sure you are doing it correctly. Talk with your healthcare provider if you have any questions.