

# *The First Hour After Birth*

When a baby is held skin-to-skin in the first hours after birth, there are 9 natural and essential newborn phases that occur in a specific order. The baby may demonstrate several actions within each of these listed phases.

## *Phase 1: The Birth Cry*

As the baby's lungs expand, this cry occurs immediately following birth.

## *Phase 2: Relaxation*

The hands are relaxed while the newborn shows no mouth movements. This phase typically begins when the birth cry has stopped. The baby is skin-to-skin with the mother and covered with a blanket.

## *Phase 3: Awakening*

The newborn exhibits small thrusts of movement in the head and shoulders. This phase generally begins about 3 minutes after birth. The newborn may exhibit head movements, open her eyes, show some mouth activity and might move her shoulders.

## *Phase 4: Activity*

Usually occurring about 8 minutes after birth, the newborn starts to make mouthing and sucking movements as the rooting reflex becomes more noticeable.

## *Phase 5: Rest*

At any point, the newborn may rest. She may have periods of resting between periods of activity throughout the first hour or so after birth.

## *Phase 6: Crawling*

Usually beginning about 35 minutes after birth, the baby approaches the breast during with short periods of action, resulting in reaching the breast and nipple.

## *Phase 7: Familiarization*

Usually initiates around 45 minutes after birth, the newborn becomes acquainted with the mother by licking the nipple and touching her breast. This could last for 20 minutes or more.

## *Phase 8: Suckling*

This early experience of learning to breastfeed usually begins about an hour after birth. The newborn takes the nipple, self-attaches and suckles.

## *Phase 9: Sleep*

The baby enters a quiet sleep. Babies regularly fall asleep about 1½ to 2 hours after birth.

## *Benefits of Skin-to-Skin for Babies*

Your baby can benefit from skin-to-skin contact, regardless of how you intend to feed her.

Babies are warmer, calmer and can hear their mother's heartbeat.

Other family members can hold and bond with babies through skin-to-skin holding, too!