



Direct Contact, Rooming In Keys to Welcoming Newborns

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ALTON, IL -- Are you or someone close to you preparing for the arrival of a new baby? The Family Birth Center at Alton Memorial Hospital has two tips on how to smooth the transition from anticipating a new arrival to parenthood in the hospital and beyond.

To ease the transition, new parents are encouraged to engage in immediate skin-to-skin contact and rooming-in with their infant.

Skin-to-skin contact means the naked newborn (except for a diaper) is placed in direct contact with Mom or Dad's bare chest. This should be done immediately in the delivery room (think of it as baby's first hug) and as much as possible in the weeks and months following birth.

This is important as new parents and their infant get to know each other and also has many great health benefits. All healthy newborns benefit from skin-to-skin care while transitioning from intrauterine to extra-uterine life. Infants placed in skin-to-skin contact stay warmer, cry less, breathe easier, maintain higher and more stable blood sugar levels, and have a lower level of stress hormones. Mothers whose infants have been kept skin to skin learn to recognize their baby's feeding cues. They also report that maternal confidence and bonding is enhanced.

The pediatricians and nurses at Alton Memorial Hospital encourage all newborns to room in with their mothers 24 hours per day. There are many advantages to keeping infants in the same room as their parents.

Babies are sensitive to too much noise, light and handling. In mom's room, baby is only exposed to his/her family and a few care providers. Baby is comforted by familiar voices, touches and smells. Finally, families get to know baby faster and can respond to the immediate needs of the newborn infant as only the mother and family can. This time is important in preparing new parents for what to expect at home with their infants.

Both skin-to-skin contact and rooming in have important implications for breastfeeding families as well. Newborns crave skin-to-skin contact and have an innate ability to latch on to the breast and breastfeed for the first time much sooner when this type of transitioning occurs. Mothers who hold their baby skin to skin after birth are more likely to make greater amounts of breast milk, have less engorgement, breastfeed longer and breastfeed without offering formula supplement.

Rooming in allows mothers to more quickly learn feeding cues, avoid artificial nipples and provides more opportunities to learn breastfeeding -- leading to early and plentiful establishment of milk supply.

The Alton Memorial Family Birth Center wants all families to have amazing memories of the first moments, months and years with baby. There are many benefits to immediate skin-to-skin contact and rooming in that will help you have the most excellent experience possible.

For more information, contact the Family Birth Center at 618-463-7455.