



Are you holding your
baby enough?

Tiny touch, Big Impact

Types of *physical touch*

Touch is the first sense babies develop - beginning at around 8 weeks in pregnancy! From the moment a baby is born they immediately seek physical touch.

Touch naturally happens during everyday care making it a large part of how infants connect with their caregivers. In addition to touch through everyday care, infants desire touch through acts of physical affection. But what is the difference between touch provided through care and touch from affection?

Practical Touch

- Holding
- Carrying
- Diaper changes
- Bathing
- Dressing/undressing
- Feeding
- Burping
- Supporting tummy time
- Guiding movement (helping to sit or stand)

Affectionate Touch

- Cuddling
- Hugging
- Kissing
- Rocking
- Soothing with gentle touch
- Stroking
- Massaging
- Tickling/playful touch
- Holding hands
- Skin-to-skin contact



Skin-to-skin contact

Kangaroo Care

A recent study conducted in 2020 had determined that 40% of moms were unaware of the technique of skin-to-skin, so let's break it down!

The World Health Organization defines skin-to-skin as the process of laying a naked infant on a caregiver's bare chest to promote bonding. Skin-to-skin contact has proven to have many benefits for both the baby and caregiver.

Click the link below to see what skin-to-skin looks like and a glimpse into the benefits it provides!



Swipe for more details

Benefits of *physical touch*

A Glimpse

Growth

Increased touch helps promote:

- ✓ *Greater weight gain*
- ✓ *Increased body length*
- ✓ *Increased head grow*

Health

Increased touch helps promote:

- ✓ *Stronger immune function*
- ✓ *Better overall physical development*

Sleep

Increased touch helps promote:

- ✓ *Higher quality of sleep*
- ✓ *Longer sleeps*

Attachment

Increased touch helps promote:

- ✓ *Stronger emotional connection*
- ✓ *Increased interactions*



The Science of *Baby Snuggles*

The research behind the benefits

Lets deep dive into two recent studies -

In the first study Du et al. looked at how touch between caregivers and premature infants effected their growth and development. In the study the babies and caregivers were split into two groups - one group received regular postnatal hospital care, while the other group received regular care plus extra touch therapy sessions twice a day for 10–15 minutes. The therapy involved providing touch during periods throughout the day such as after a bath or before being put to sleep. With the babies laying on their backs, gentle touch was given starting at the head working its way down to the feet, then to the back and buttocks. Caregivers were also taught how to continue these touch techniques at home.

The babies were measured at birth and again at three months to track things like growth, immune function, sleep, and emotional development. The results showed that babies who received the extra touch grew more (in length, weight, and head size), had stronger immune systems, and slept longer and better compared to those who only received standard care.

In the second study Vittner et al. researches how skin-to-skin contact effects both the baby's and caregiver's oxytocin and cortisol levels. In this study, saliva samples were taken before any contact, during skin-to-skin contact and after completing 60 minutes of skin-to-skin.

The study discovered that during the skin-to-skin contact oxytocin levels had risen for both the babies and the parents and that cortisol levels had dropped.

But what does this mean? Oxytocin is a hormone sometimes referred to as the love hormone - it plays a large role in our attachment, bonding and trust. Meanwhile, cortisol is a stress hormone which also affects our immune systems and sleep patterns!

How much touch does your baby really need?

Here's the tricky part - we don't really know the exact amount. Although I wish I could tell you exactly how many minutes of touch a day your baby needs for maximum benefits - that information doesn't exist, yet!

What we do know for sure is that providing some gentle touch (think massages) to your babies before baths and bed or scheduling in some extra baby snuggles or skin-to-skin contact throughout the day can be beneficial to both your babies and your own health and overall wellness!

Behind The Scenes

Where the research came from

The information in this research was collected through a systematic rapid review. The review was done using peer-reviewed qualitative and quantitative literature published between 2015-2025 focusing on infants from birth to the age of 1. Articles were sourced from the Academic Search Complete and ERIC Databases using specific search strings and filters.

Approximately 50 articles were screened for eligibility and data from the screening process has been displayed using the PRISMA flow chart. With 0 compatible results, 2 additional resources were hand picked and included in the research. Articles were carefully screened through Covidence – a software tool used to support the review process. Covidence automatically removed any duplicate articles uploaded. Initially, remaining articles were uploaded and screened through titles and abstracts for relevance. Successful articles were then screened for full text to ensure eligibility for inclusion.

Following the screening process, a data extraction page was created where the data extracted was clearly organized and presented within a table. Data was collected relevant to the study's overall themes and research questions of how varying levels of physical interaction between infants and caregivers effects the holistic development of infants. Some key information and data that was extracted from the articles include the author(s), year of publication, country of origin, purpose of study, population and sample size, methods used and key findings. The initial extraction was done using a template created in Covidence, ensuring a consistent extraction process. By systematically including and displaying these details, the extraction process highlighted any themes, trends or gaps in the data.

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