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## **The Golden Hour After Birth – What is it and Why is it so important?**

### *Introducing the ‘Golden Hour’*

Soon after birth, babies find themselves in a completely different environment, which is devoid of the cosiness, security and warmth that the womb usually provides<sup>1</sup>. Babies slowly start to realize that there are things which will now have to be dealt with by themselves in order to thrive, including breathing, nutrition and thirst<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the transition from the womb to the outside world can be quite a challenging period for the newborn<sup>2</sup>. Here, we will be discussing how ensuring an undisturbed ‘golden hour’ after birth can facilitate this transition.

### *Understanding the ‘Golden Hour’*

Unless medically indicated, the umbilical cord is now being left untouched for the first few minutes. This encourages babies to be put skin-to-skin on the mother’s chest immediately after birth. Thankfully, the initial newborn checks and weighing are also being routinely delayed - leaving mummies more focused on their new bundle of joy for at least an hour! This period, often known as the ‘golden hour’, is one of the most critical phases in the first few moments of life<sup>4</sup>. The early initiation of breastfeeding<sup>4</sup> is also an integral part of the ‘golden hour’<sup>6</sup>. If left skin-to-skin, babies are able to crawl to the mother’s breast and attach to the nipple by themselves<sup>8</sup>. This phenomenon is known as the ‘breast crawl’<sup>8</sup>.

### *Benefits of the ‘Golden Hour’*

The ‘golden hour’ is an opportunity to give babies the best start in their life<sup>7</sup>. As a matter of fact, midwives are lately doing their utmost to cater for this “new” trend. Following birth, babies will need a lot of comfort and skin-to-skin is the best option to keep the newborn calm, settled and secure<sup>1</sup>. Skin-to-skin positioning also allows the baby to hear the mother’s heartbeat and feel her warmth, resembling the womb environment<sup>6</sup>. During this precious

time, babies are better able to maintain their body temperature and breathing pattern, which in turn helps to stimulate their digestive and nervous systems<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, keeping this time quiet will also help the mother to go through the important physiological and hormonal changes smoothly<sup>9</sup>. While the mother is left to enjoy the first moments with her baby, all the important components remaining in the placenta are transferred to the little one. Delaying cord clamping by at least five minutes will allow more blood to be transferred to the baby, increasing his or her iron storage<sup>1</sup>. As previously mentioned, breastfeeding is another fundamental element of the 'golden hour'<sup>6</sup>. Apart from helping with the expulsion of the placenta and reducing the risk of excessive bleeding after delivery, breastfeeding is also considered as another opportunity for bonding<sup>8</sup>. Research also shows that women who start breastfeeding soon after birth are more likely to continue breastfeeding for a longer period<sup>6</sup>. Without doubt, the 'golden hour' will serve as a beautiful memory for the whole family.

#### References

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