



Kangaroo Care

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



What Is Kangaroo Care?

Kangaroo Care is the skin-to-skin holding of your baby (wearing only a diaper) against your bare chest, secured with a wrap. There are three parts to Kangaroo Care:

1

Continuous skin-to-skin contact between a baby and parent.

2

Support to breastfeed and provide human milk.

3

Care and support of the baby and parent without separation, with timely discharge home and appropriate follow-up.

Holding your baby in Kangaroo Care is one of the best things you can do to help your baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). You and your baby will benefit from staying close to each other for long periods of time as soon as possible after birth. Holding your baby in Kangaroo Care helps to decrease the stresses of being born early.



“Kangaroo care meant everything to us as a family. We could do feeds with her, which was really lovely. Just holding for hours. It connected myself with being a mom. It was my first moments of motherhood and feeling like I was helping my daughter.”

– NICU Parent, Michelle

The importance of Kangaroo Care

Kangaroo Care provides warmth and comfort to you and your baby in many ways, as well as feelings of closeness and bonding. The skin-to-skin contact between your baby and you is the key to experiencing all of these benefits.

When your baby is held in Kangaroo Care they can hear your heartbeat and voice, feel your breathing and smell and feel your skin. Having your baby close to you skin-to-skin is comforting to your baby.

For Baby

- Helps brain growth and development
- Stabilises heart and breathing rate
- Reduces pain and stress during painful procedures
- Promotes earlier breastfeeding
- Maintains body temperature
- Protects your baby with your good bacteria
- Decreases risk of infections

For Mother

- Decreases separation between mother and baby
- Helps milk flow and improves milk supply
- Decreases anxiety and depression

For Family

- Improves bonding and attachment
- Improves confidence in taking care of your preterm baby



The importance of Kangaroo Care

How does Kangaroo Care help my baby's brain?

Preterm babies' brains continue to grow rapidly after birth. Early supportive touch, like Kangaroo Care or hand hugging, helps your baby's brain develop and lessens the impact from stimulation (noise, light, pain) of the NICU. Early and continuous Kangaroo Care has lasting effects on your baby's brain development while in the NICU, once home, and throughout their life.

Why is sleep important?

Preterm babies build their brains during sleep. Your baby will sleep best in Kangaroo Care. Sleep is needed to regulate body systems, store energy, and develop the senses (hearing, touch, taste, smell, and vision) correctly. During sleep, important sensory information is being organised into long-lasting brain circuits, pathways, and connections. Kangaroo Care promotes the most optimal sleep cycles. Protect your baby's sleep cycles by doing routine cares (diapers) with your baby's natural sleep and wake cycles. Talk to your nurse to learn more.

When is my baby ready for Kangaroo Care?

Talk to your baby's healthcare team to see if your baby is ready to be held in Kangaroo Care. Every baby is assessed individually.



How do I prepare for Kangaroo Care?

Spend as much time as possible close to your baby. Parents are the primary care providers for their baby and can both participate in Kangaroo Care.

You may feel nervous the first time you hold your baby. This is normal. Your healthcare team will help you to feel safe and comfortable. Your nurse will help you to learn your baby's signs and cues that tell you if they are comfortable and enjoying Kangaroo Care.

If you cannot be in the NICU all the time, ask another family member or other support person to do Kangaroo Care with your baby.

Preparing for Kangaroo Care

Plan your Kangaroo Care with your baby's healthcare team.

- Make yourself comfortable before you begin by going to the washroom, eating beforehand or having a light snack and water nearby.
- Babies like their mother's natural scent. Please avoid wearing strong perfumes and lotions and smoking before you do Kangaroo Care.
- Ask for a comfortable chair that reclines.
- Keep conversations quiet and dim the lights if possible.
- Express milk before, during, or after you practice Kangaroo Care with your baby.
- Prepare your baby. Change your baby's diaper and take their temperature.
- Remove your top, so you are bare chested. Put on the wrap.
- Learn to watch and listen to your baby.
- Hold your baby for as long as possible.





Kangaroo Care and breastfeeding

Kangaroo Care will give you and your baby the best start possible with breastfeeding. Many mothers find they express more milk and maintain their milk supply when they practice Kangaroo Care with their baby.

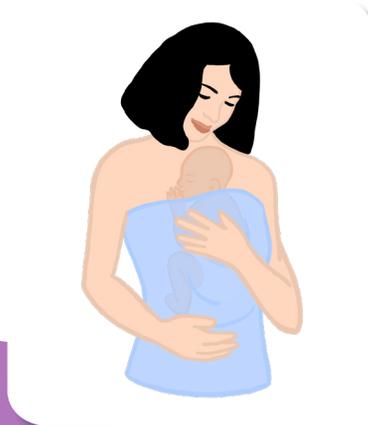
Babies who are held in Kangaroo Care are more likely to have early breastfeeding behaviours and breastfeed for longer. Ask your nurse about your baby's feeding cues. You can safely breastfeed in Kangaroo Care when the wrap is pulled down below your baby's neck.

Kangaroo Care is important for all families regardless of infant feeding choices.

How do I use the Kangaroo Care wrap?

Talk to your nurse about choosing a type of wrap and size that fits best. The wrap should be snug to hold the baby tightly to your chest and be comfortable to breathe.

Follow the manufacturers instructions for information on safe positioning and ways to tie the wrap.



For how long should I do Kangaroo Care?

Hold your baby in Kangaroo Care as soon as possible after birth for as long as possible. More time is better, up to 24 hours a day. This will help your baby have a deeper and more restful sleep. When your baby is held for more than a full sleep cycle (about 60 minutes) they are able to experience the benefits of Kangaroo Care.

Hold your baby to provide comfort during care practices such as heel pokes for blood work, intravenous insertion, diaper changes, and temperatures.

If it isn't a good time for Kangaroo Care, what else can I do?

When your baby cannot be held in Kangaroo Care you can still provide loving touches that are helpful for both you and your baby.



Hand hugging

Hand hugging or facilitated tucking is done by placing one hand above your baby's head while the other hand cups their feet and provides light pressure. This makes your baby feel contained and safe. You can do this any time to calm your baby. It is very helpful to hand hug during procedures like blood work.

Sing, read, talk

It is important for your baby to hear your voice. Sing, read, or talk to your baby. Singing helps to calm babies and both reading and talking promote bonding and long-term language development.

How do I pick up my baby?

It is less stressful for most babies when parents pick up (or transfer) their baby. If you are nervous about picking up your baby, talk to your healthcare team about practicing the transfer first. Being well prepared to transfer ensures it is safe and your baby will be more comfortable.

1 Talk to your baby's healthcare team to plan your Kangaroo Care time. You may need help with the transfer depending on the needs of your baby.

2 Raise the incubator to hip height. Open the incubator door or raise the top of the incubator so you can get your body as close as possible to your baby. Place both hands under your baby and contain your baby's arms and legs.

3 Lower your chest to your baby and lift your baby in one movement to your chest. Support your baby's body and head as you stand up.

4 A healthcare team member or support person can adjust the lines and tubes as needed. Pull the wrap over your baby's body to the top of their shoulder/bottom of the ear lobe. Pause to see that all team members and equipment are in a safe position and sit down slowly in the chair.

5 Secure tubes and lines to the wrap or gown. Check the positioning of your baby and the wrap. It may take your baby time to go back to their normal vital signs. You can support your baby's move into Kangaroo Care by being patient and remaining calm.

6 Get comfortable and enjoy this time with your baby.



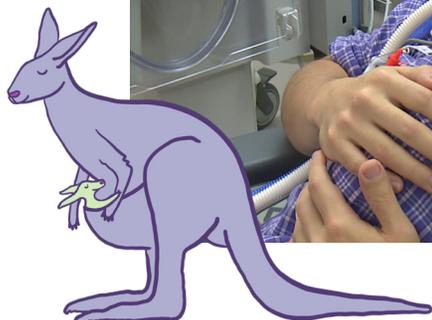
Kangaroo Care safer positioning checklist

- ✓ Sit in a semi-reclined position, not flat
- ✓ Baby is in an upright chest-to-chest position
- ✓ Baby's face is not covered by the wrap
- ✓ Baby's neck is straight
- ✓ Baby's legs and arms are flexed, in a frog-like position



Safe sleep in the hospital while in Kangaroo Care

It is normal for you to become sleepy or want to rest during Kangaroo Care. If you feel yourself falling asleep, recline in a chair (do not lay flat), keep your baby secure in the wrap and in a safe position while on a monitor. Let your baby's nurse know you might fall asleep.



If your baby moves to another hospital

Your baby may be moved to another hospital. Here are some suggestions to help you and your baby adjust.

- Let your baby's healthcare team know how much Kangaroo Care you are doing.
- Discuss how you can be involved in your baby's care so you will feel confident when it is time for your baby to go home.
- Be your baby's advocate. If the healthcare team does not offer Kangaroo Care, ask for help to do it.

Should I continue Kangaroo Care once I leave the hospital?

Yes, practice Kangaroo Care at home. You and your baby will still enjoy being close at home. Your baby will let you know when they no longer like to be held in Kangaroo Care.

Create a safer sleep plan that works for your family and respects your cultural traditions at: <https://goo.gl/RzgPWC>

Or scan here with your smart phone:





Kangaroo Care

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

We use the term Kangaroo Care to refer to the practice of early and prolonged skin-to-skin contact between a caregiver and a baby in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Use of the term Kangaroo Care recognizes all types of parents and families.



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**To learn more about Kangaroo Care
and other helpful resources, go to
perinataleservicesbc.ca/health-info/newborn-care
or scan here with your smartphone:**

