

# Kangaroo Care



## What Is Kangaroo Care?

Kangaroo, or skin-to-skin care, provides an opportunity for you and your baby to spend more one-on-one time together to bond and get to know each other. During this special time, the baby is dressed in only a diaper and placed upright against your bare chest. Once the baby is skin-to-skin, a blanket or wrap can be placed over you both for warmth and privacy.

**We understand that the first time you hold your baby can feel overwhelming, but the NICU staff will be there to make sure that you and your baby are safe and comfortable.**

## What are the benefits of Kangaroo Care?

Research shows that the interruption that occurs when a preterm or sick baby is separated from their parents can have a significant impact on parents and babies. Kangaroo Care fosters a strong bond between the parent and child.

- Increased confidence in caring for the baby
- Decreased postpartum depression for Mom
- Increased sense of involvement and ability to care for the baby

### Benefits for Baby:

- Provides feelings of warmth, comfort and safety
- Improves regulation of the baby's temperature, heart rate, breathing and oxygenation
- Improves quality of sleep, which can help with weight gain
- Increased immune protection to fight infections.
- Breastfeeds sooner and longer
- Improved parental attachment and bonding
- Decreased infant pain response and stress
- Increased social, learning and motor skills in early childhood
- Decreased length of hospital stay

### Benefits for Parent(s):

- Decreased stress and anxiety
- Increased attachment, bonding and feelings of protectiveness
- Improved breast milk production for Mom
- Improved understanding of the baby's behaviors, cues and needs.

### When Can I Kangaroo?

Kangaroo Care or skin-to-skin can begin immediately after delivery for most babies. For others, it can start as soon as the baby is medically stable and meets criteria for safe skin-to-skin care.

Kangaroo Care should last for at least one hour, but it can continue for as long as you and your baby are safe and comfortable. Sessions of less than one hour are not advised because of the stress the movement can place on your baby. Be sure to ask for your nurse's help before picking up your baby for holding or skin-to-skin care.

## How should I prepare for Kangaroo Care?

In the NICU, Kangaroo Care is done at your baby's bedside while you sit comfortably in a chair.



Let your baby's nurse know when you will be coming so they can be prepared. You will need to spend at least one (1) hour doing Kangaroo Care.



It's best to shower before coming to the hospital. Check your chest for any open rashes or wounds. If you have these, do not do Kangaroo Care until your skin has healed.



Wear a button-down shirt or one that easily opens from the front.



Avoid using perfumes, scented lotions or smoking before Kangaroo Care. Babies are very sensitive to strong or heavy scents.



Make yourself comfortable, but you should never fall asleep while holding your baby. If you are getting tired, let your nurse know so we can safely return the baby to bed.

## What should I expect?

A lot will depend on your baby.

- If your baby has a breathing tube, IV tubing or a feeding tube, a nurse and respiratory therapist will need to help you get the baby safely into position.
- There are two methods for doing skin-to-skin care: Sitting or Standing Transfer. Your nurse will show you how to keep you and your baby safe. Discuss with them which method you want to try.
- The baby will be dressed only in a diaper and placed upright on your chest, laying on their tummy. The baby's head will be turned to the side and their arms and legs will be tucked in for comfort.
- Once your baby is safely in place, it is time to relax, just you and your baby. We can provide mirrors so you can see your baby while they rest comfortably. You can quietly read, sing or talk to your baby while Kangarooing. It should be a quiet time.



## What if I'm not quite ready for Kangaroo Care?

If you or your baby are not ready to try skin-to-skin care, there are things you can do to help soothe and bond with your baby. Your nurse can help you.

- Use a gentle, soft and still touch.
- Provide "hand hugs" or containment.
- Talk quietly or read to your baby.
- Sing or play gentle, soft music. Our music therapist can help you choose something appropriate.



## Are there times I can't Kangaroo?

Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis after discussion with your baby's physician and care team. Our goal is to keep your infant safe. The following conditions or situations may prevent an infant from participating in Kangaroo Care:

- Infants born at 22 to 24 weeks, during first week of life
- Infants born at 25 to 30 weeks, during first 72 hours of life
- Infants using High-Frequency Jet or Oscillating Ventilator
- Infants with open wounds, skin rashes or lesions
- Infants with unstable vital signs
- Infants on cooling therapy for Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy (HIE)

**You and your baby are our top priorities. Our goal is to help you embrace Kangaroo Care and bond with your little one. Please let your nurse know if you have any questions at all.**