



Children's Hospital

London Health Sciences Centre

Family Information

KANGAROO CARE

in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

What is Kangaroo Care?

Kangaroo Care, sometimes called skin to skin is a way of holding, touching and caring for your baby. Your baby is dressed in a diaper and is placed on your bare chest and then covered by your clothing or blanket.

Why is Kangaroo Care good for my baby?

Kangaroo Care is a very important part of your baby's care. Holding your baby this way is a wonderful way of getting to know your baby, strengthening the bond between yourself and your baby.

We know that babies stay warm, breathe well and sleep better when enjoying Kangaroo Care.

Who can Kangaroo Care?

Both mothers and fathers can participate in Kangaroo Care.

When can my baby be held skin to skin?

There is no specific age or time when a baby is ready for Kangaroo Care. Your baby must be medically stable to be held this way. The staff will help to explain when your baby is stable enough for Kangaroo Care to begin. Your baby must be able to stay on your chest for at least one hour to begin Kangaroo Care. Sometimes babies get sick during their stay in the NICU. If this happens to your baby, Kangaroo Care may need to be stopped until your baby gets better.

What do I need to do?

If you are interested in Kangaroo Care, please talk with your nurses to decide on a good time. It is important that a nurse be available to help you and your baby get comfortable and to make sure that all is going well.

Plan to spend at least one hour Kangarooing and try to wear comfortable clothing. A shirt that buttons/zips up the front is great because it is easy to cover your baby once he/she is on your chest.

Babies are very sensitive to smells, so please do not wear perfume or colognes and use unscented soap products.

Babies are also sensitive to cigarette smoke and should not be exposed to it, even second hand. Please refrain from smoking prior to visiting. Please do not wear any clothing that has been exposed to smoking when kangarooing your baby.

How does Kangaroo Care help breastfeeding?

Babies usually spend some time learning how to breastfeed. For preterm babies, this can start when babies are kangarooing. Often they will try to snuggle down to try to smell and lick at the nipple. Sometimes they will even try and suck... this is a wonderful way to start the learning process. You can think of it as the “baby steps” of breastfeeding.

Mothers who hold their baby this way often experience an increase in breast milk production so it is important to try and pump after Kangaroo Care.

When should Kangaroo Care be stopped?

There is no set time to stop kangarooing your baby.

Some parents continue Kangaroo Care their entire stay in the unit and after discharge. Both babies and parents love the feeling of closeness that comes of Kangarooing.

The NICU staff want to help you get close to your baby any way we can. Please let us know how we can help your family.

If you have any questions or concerns or need assistance, please do not hesitate to ask.