
What is kangaroo care?

Kangaroo care is a way of holding your baby so that your skin and your baby's skin are next to each other. There are many benefits for both you and your baby.

Who can do kangaroo care?

Any parent can do kangaroo care.

Why should I do kangaroo care?

Kangaroo care benefits babies and parents in many ways. Some ways include:

- It helps the birth parent make more breast milk and increase the chance of breastfeeding later.
- It helps the baby's brain grow and helps them develop and meet milestones.
- Babies who have kangaroo care:
 - Stay warmer.
 - Cry less and sleep better.
 - Eat and gain weight better.
 - Breathe easier.
 - Get sick less.
 - Stay in the hospital for less time.

Your baby is most comfortable when they are close to you because they:

- Know the sound of your voice and heartbeat.
- Know how you smell and the feel of your touch.

Kangaroo care may help you, too. It may help you to:

- Feel closer to your baby.
- Ease some concerns about the equipment used to help your baby.
- Feel more confident about taking care of your baby

When should I do kangaroo care?

Most babies are ready to do kangaroo care as soon as they are born. Sometimes your baby's health condition may require you to wait a few days or weeks. The care team will let you know if your baby is ready. **Ask your baby's nurse or doctor any day that you visit and can stay for a few hours.**

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Kangaroo care, continued

Where should I do kangaroo care?

You may do kangaroo care by your baby's bedside while your baby is in the hospital. The care team can give you a comfortable chair, foot stool, gown and privacy screen.

How do I do kangaroo care?

Follow these steps and ask your baby's nurse for more details:

- Dress your baby in only a diaper.
- Unbutton your shirt or blouse. Remove any undergarments (such as an undershirt or bra) so your skin touches your baby's skin. You may also wear a hospital gown, robe you bring from home, or a wrap designed for kangaroo care.
- Hold your baby to your chest, skin-to-skin. Make sure there are no clothes or blankets between you and your baby. You may use a small blanket to cover your baby's back or put a hat on your baby's head.
- Try to do kangaroo care with your baby for at least 1 to 2 hours each time. Any amount of time is good, but the more you can do kangaroo care, the better.
- Complete all self-care activities before doing kangaroo care.
- Stay awake to help keep your baby safe.
- Use this as a time to interact and bond with your baby. Good ways to interact with your baby during kangaroo care include:
 - Talking to your baby.
 - Singing to them.
 - Reading to them.
- Avoid distracting and noisy activities, such as talking on the phone, making video calls, or watching loud TV or videos.



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How can I help keep my baby safe during kangaroo care?

- Ensure you are clean by showering before coming to visit.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when you enter the unit. Then, wash them again or use an alcohol-based gel or foam right before kangaroo care.
- If you need or want to use your phone during kangaroo care, use sanitizing wipes to clean the phone right beforehand. This is to make sure no germs from your hands will get to your baby.
- Do not use any products that leave a strong smell, such as perfume, cigarettes or marijuana.
- If your baby has a breathing tube:
 - Make sure they do not move their head from the position they are placed in for kangaroo care.

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Kangaroo care, continued

- Ask your baby’s nurse or respiratory therapist for help if you need to reposition yourself or your baby.
- If your baby has an I.V., make sure it does not get pulled or tangled.

What happens after my baby goes home?

You may continue to hold your baby next to your skin at home. Some good times to do this may be:

- After a bath.
- When awake in the morning.
- When eating.

After your baby goes home from the hospital, talk with their pediatrician about how to safely provide kangaroo care.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.