



## About Skin-to-Skin Care

You may be able to hold your baby in the NICU as soon as she is stable and before she is ready to begin feedings. If so, you may be interested in skin-to-skin care, also called kangaroo care.

### What is Kangaroo Care?

Kangaroo care was developed in South America as a way to keep premature infants warm so that they could be released early from overcrowded hospitals. Mothers were instructed to hold their diaper-clad premature infants beneath their clothing, skin-to-skin, snuggled between their warm breasts.



The surprising benefits of kangaroo care for the infant include:

- Warmth
- Stability of heartbeat and breathing
- Increased time spent in the deep sleep and quiet alert states
- Decreased crying
- Increased weight gain
- Increased breastfeeding (</english/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/default.aspx>)

These benefits are apparent even when kangaroo care occurs for only a few minutes each day.

### Dads Can Give Kangaroo Care, Too!

Both mothers and fathers can give kangaroo care. Most nurseries have comfortable rocking chairs and screens that can be placed around your chair or the baby's care area. Simply wear a layer of clothing that opens down the front, and sit behind the screen or with your back to the room. Don't bother to dress your baby or wrap her in a blanket—all she needs is a diaper because she will stay warm next to your body. You may notice that your infant tolerates these holding sessions much better when they are not preceded by undressing, diaper changing, temperature taking, dressing again, and swaddling in blankets. Snuggle your baby upright on your chest, or lay your baby with her head against your chest.

Kangaroo care is a nice way for you to get acquainted with your baby in the NICU (</English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/How-You-Can-Participate-in-the-Care-of-Your-Baby-in-the-NICU.aspx>). The feeling of your baby's warm skin against yours is a special closeness and comfort for you both. At a time when so many people are caring for your baby, kangaroo care provides special moments of belonging that only you can experience with your baby.

### After You Take Baby Home

After you take your baby home (</English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/Bringing-Baby-Home-Preparing-Yourself-Your-Home-and-Your-Family.aspx>), find times to hold him right next to your skin during bottle feeding (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Practical-Bottle-Feeding-Tips.aspx>). For example, you can do it during a bath (</English/ages-stages/baby/bathing-skin-care/pages/Bathing-Your-Newborn.aspx>) or first thing in the morning. Allow yourself and your baby the pleasure and the tactile stimulation of skin-to-skin contact during these times.

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