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NationwideChildrens.org

KANGAROO CARE FOR YOUR INFANT

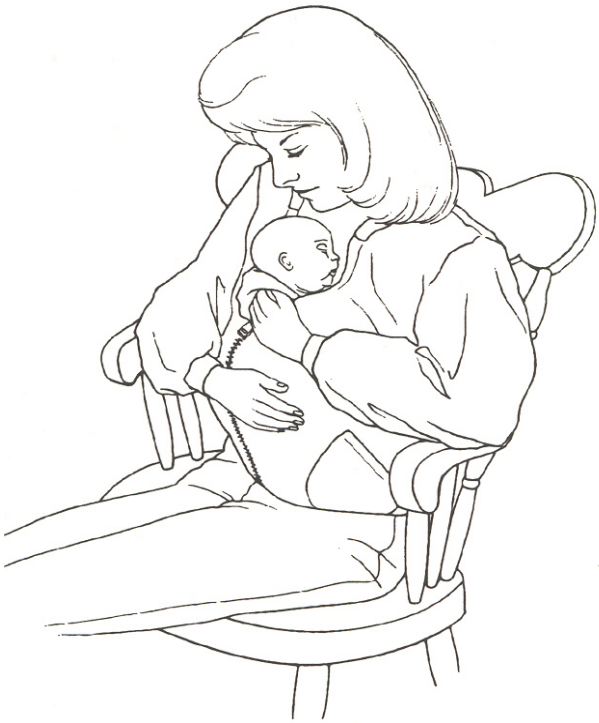
Kangaroo care is a special way for you to hold your infant that gives the baby skin-to-skin contact. The baby wears only a diaper and is nestled against your chest. Since your infant knows you by your scent, touch, and the way your voice and heartbeat sound, he is most comfortable close to you. If you wish, both parents can enjoy giving kangaroo care.

BENEFITS FOR YOUR BABY AND FOR YOU

Your baby gets warmth and comfort from the close physical contact, and you'll have feelings of closeness and bonding with your baby. The more you practice kangaroo care, the better you will become at it. Babies who receive kangaroo care spend their waking time more quiet and alert. Their sleep is deeper and more restful.

For infants who are breastfed, kangaroo care may help them suckle more easily. It can also help to increase mom's milk volume so the baby will gain weight faster.

Using kangaroo care lessens the chance of infection, helps regulate baby's heart and breathing rates, and helps your baby to go home sooner.



Picture 1 Giving kangaroo care

WHEN KANGAROO CARE IS DONE

Kangaroo care may be started after your baby is considered stable and has no trouble with being handled. If you want to try kangaroo care, ask your doctor or nurse to tell you when it's all right to begin.

Parents usually start doing the kangaroo care once a day for about an hour each time. As you and your baby get used to it, you can increase the time to 3 or 4 hours. Kangaroo care should last an hour or more for your baby to get the most benefit. While you are giving kangaroo care, you should avoid other stimulation such as rocking and talking. Kangaroo time is a special quiet time to be enjoyed by you and your infant.

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HOW IT IS DONE

Kangaroo care can be done at your baby's bedside while you sit in a chair. We provide curtains or screens for privacy. To begin kangaroo care, please follow these steps:

1. Let your baby's nurses know when you'll be coming so they can plan for it.
2. Shower before coming to the hospital. Check your chest for rashes or open wounds. If you have these, do not do kangaroo care until your skin has healed.
3. Wear or bring a loose-fitting shirt or warm-up jacket that buttons or zips up the front.
4. Please do not smoke or use perfume or scented lotions before providing kangaroo care.
5. Make yourself comfortable before you begin. Use the bathroom. Bring liquids for you to drink during the time with your baby. Mothers should remove their bra. We suggest that you use a stool to prop up your feet when you're sitting down.
6. Once your baby is on your chest, cover him with a blanket, then button or zip your shirt to keep your infant warm and in place.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.