

## 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 (Picture 1). The baby wears only a diaper and is held close against your chest. Since your infant already knows you by your scent, touch, and the way your voice and heartbeat sound, he or she is most comfortable close to you. Both parents can do kangaroo care as often and as long as possible throughout your baby's stay in the hospital.

### Reasons to do kangaroo care

Kangaroo care is good for mom, dad, and baby in so many ways. Some of the ways kangaroo care can be good for your baby and for baby's parents are:

- Mom makes more milk and has a better chance of breastfeeding
- Baby stays warmer and body temperature is better
- Baby has improved heart rate and breathing rate (vital signs)
- Baby has improved weight gain
- Baby cries less and has lower stress levels
- Baby has improved sleep
- Baby and parent bond more
- Baby has decreased pain and risk of infection
- Baby has better brain growth and development



**Picture 1** Giving kangaroo care.

## When kangaroo care is done

- Kangaroo care may be started as soon as you are able. Please let your nurse or doctor know when you are ready to begin. If you are not certain, the nurse may help you try to become more comfortable. **If your baby has a breathing tube, read the instructions on page 3.**
- Parents usually start kangaroo care once or twice a day for at least one hour each time or as long as it is tolerated by your baby. The longer you hold your baby, the better. Any amount of time is good, but it is best to try for at least 1 to 2 hours each day.
- Avoid doing other things during kangaroo care, like fast rocking, talking on the phone, or watching TV. Kangaroo time is a quiet time to be enjoyed by you and your infant. Soft talking to your baby, singing a lullaby, or reading a book are good activities that help your baby's brain grow.

## How to do kangaroo care

Kangaroo care can be done at your baby's bedside while you sit in a chair. An adult bed can be brought in if needed. We provide curtains or screens for privacy.

To do kangaroo care, please follow these steps:

1. Let your baby's nurses know when you will be coming so they can plan for it. You should plan to spend **at least 1 hour** doing kangaroo care.
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. Do not smoke or use perfume or scented lotions before doing kangaroo care.
5. Pump your breasts **and use the toilet** right before you start kangaroo care. You can also pump your breasts while doing kangaroo care if you are holding your baby for a long time, just ask your nurse for help.
6. Your baby should be dressed in only a diaper. Mothers should remove their bra and dads should be bare-chested.
7. The nurse will help you position your baby on your chest. Once your infant is on your chest, cover him or her with a blanket, then button or zip your shirt or a special kangaroo care wrap. This will help keep baby warm and in place.
8. Make yourself comfortable. Sit back and raise the footrest on your recliner or prop your feet up. Enjoy this special time with your baby.
9. It is safe for you to fall asleep while performing kangaroo care in the hospital when you are wearing the special wrap to keep your baby safe. **However, you should never fall asleep while holding your baby at home.**

## Kangarooing or holding your baby with a breathing tube

If your baby has a breathing tube (Picture 2), there are specific instructions to follow. The breathing tube is very important to helping your baby heal. Any time your baby is moved, there is a chance that the tube could move and cause breathing problems.

Please follow these directions to keep your baby safe:

- You must ask your nurse before getting your baby in and out of the bed. **The nurse or a respiratory therapist are the only people who should move your baby.**
- If you are uncomfortable or need to change position during kangaroo care or holding, call the nurse first for help. Make sure your call light is close before the nurse hands you your baby.
- The nurse will be checking on your baby's breathing tube often while you give kangaroo care. Do not be alarmed.
- **Do not put your baby back into bed or reposition your baby by yourself.**



**Picture 2** Giving kangaroo care to a baby with a breathing tube.

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

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