# Kangaroo Care: Information for Parents

*Kangaroo care* is a way of holding a baby so that there is skin-to-skin contact with the parent. It is used to help form the special mother-baby bond following sudden separation during the birth experience. Kangaroo care is important for fathers, too!

There are many benefits to kangaroo care, including keeping your baby warm, helping your baby gain weight, improving your baby’s heart rate and oxygen level, and increasing the mom’s milk supply, as well as increasing the special antibodies in the breast milk that help protect your baby from infection. Some research shows long-term effects include helping with your baby’s brain function and growth.



Here’s what you need to know about kangaroo care:

* This type of holding your baby usually begins before a feeding and continues for the duration of the feeding. Talk to your nurse about how kangaroo care is done in your baby’s unit.
* Please shower and put on clean clothes before coming to the hospital.
* You will hold your baby for at least 1 hour and up to 3 hours.
* Use the bathroom before kangaroo care.
* You will open your shirt. (Button-down shirts work well and can be left at the bedside. Moms will want to remove their bras.)
* A standing transfer is easiest for the baby. The nurse will initially assist you in preparing the baby for transfer. He or she will place a blanket under the baby and secure any tubes that may be necessary. You will stand next to the baby’s isolette, place your hands under the blanket, and draw the baby toward your chest. Once you have the baby secure against your chest, you can step backward toward the chair and sit. Alternatively, the nurse will place your baby on your chest after you sit down. Some units may have special chairs designed just for kangaroo care.
* Your baby will be covered snuggly with a blanket.
* Do not wear chains or necklaces.
* No loud conversations with visitors should take place during this time.
* For the safety of your baby, please do not sleep while holding your baby. Your nurse will check on you and your baby frequently during kangaroo care.
* Use of cell phones is not recommended during your visit in the neonatal intensive care unit.
* Do not smoke until after visiting your baby.

As soon as your baby is stable enough to hold, you may start kangaroo care. We strongly encourage this special type of holding at least once per day. The wonderful thing about kangaroo care is that you can continue it even after you are home.