

Kangaroo Care

The power of
skin-to-skin holding



Close to me



- Many new moms and dads feel nervous about touching their baby in the NICU. That is a common feeling.
- This information will support you as you prepare to touch, hold or do kangaroo care (skin-to-skin) with your baby.
- We want you and your baby to be safe and feel comfortable.

Stay close to me with...

...gentle, still touch.



- Gentle, still touch is very important, especially for the most sick and fragile of babies.
- It might make you feel good to stroke your baby, but it doesn't feel good to your baby in the NICU. Stroking can make a baby feel uneasy or uncomfortable. Touching without moving your hands is best.
- Be sure to follow the NICU handwashing guidelines before touching your baby.
- Try to make sure your hands are warm when they touch your baby.

Stay close to me with...

...hand hugs.



You can comfort your baby with a hand hug.

- Place very light pressure on your baby's head with one hand and cup his feet gently with the other hand.
- We call this giving your baby a hand hug. Be sure to keep your hands still. Remember: no stroking.
- A hand hug can sometimes calm a fussy baby.
- When you give your baby a hand hug, you can feel your baby breathe and see your baby relax.



Stay close to me with...

...kangaroo care.



Kangaroo care is a way to hold your baby so that there is as much skin contact between you and your baby as possible.

- For kangaroo care, your baby is placed upright on your bare chest.
- Ask the nurse for a warm blanket to cover you and your baby.
- Strong smells like perfume or cigarette smoke on you or your clothing can bother your baby. Be sure to wash before holding.
- Hold your baby for at least 1 hour in this position. Be sure to go to the bathroom and put your phone away before getting comfortable. Your baby needs your full attention.

Benefits to your baby

Kangaroo care is good for your baby because it can:

- Keep your baby warm
- Stabilize your baby's heart rate
- Help your baby gain weight
- Comfort your baby



Benefits to you

Kangaroo care is good for moms and dads, too, because:

- It can help you bond with your baby.
- It can stimulate a mother's ability to make breast milk.
- It can reduce your stress and lift your spirits.
- It may help you become more confident parents.



Stay close to me by...

...feeding me.



You may decide to breastfeed, provide breast milk or give formula to your baby. No matter what you decide, feeding your baby is a wonderful way to get close to your child.

- Breast milk is the best food for most babies. It contains everything a baby needs for healthy growth and development during the first 6 months of life. It protects a baby from many illnesses.
- Many premature or sick babies cannot feed from the breast right away. Mothers can use a breast pump to express their milk so that the milk can be fed to their babies through a tube or with a dropper. If you have problems or discomfort breastfeeding or decide not to breastfeed, formula now has many vital nutrients for your baby. Make feeding time to connect with and be close to your baby.
- Dads can feed their baby, too! Giving a baby expressed (pumped) breast milk or formula is a great way for a new dad to get close to his baby.

Stay close to me by...

...reading, singing and talking to me.



Your baby knows your voice and is comforted by hearing its soft, soothing, familiar sound.

- Reading is something you can do with your child for many years.
- In the NICU, most babies at 30 weeks are ready to hear you read or sing to them. When your baby is quiet and alert, he will be interested in your soft, soothing voice. This is the perfect time to read a short book to your baby or sing a soft lullaby!
- Look for books that:
 - Have pictures in bright contrasting colors
 - Are made of cardboard or cloth for durability
 - Have pictures of other babies' faces

Stay close to my...

...brothers and sisters, too!



- Teach your older children how to wash their hands before holding their baby brother or sister.
- Make the first time a sibling gets to hold their new brother or sister a BIG deal – take photographs, make a picture frame that says “My big brother/sister loves me,” etc.
- And even though it might be hard, spend time with your older children outside the NICU. They need and miss you. Tell them how important they are to you and how much you love them. This is a difficult time for your older kids, too.

Stay close to your partner.



- Set aside private time for just you and your partner to be together, away from the NICU and away from other family members.
- Both you and your partner need time to touch, hold and have kangaroo care with your baby alone, and as a couple. When you're in the NICU, offer to take photos while your partner holds your baby.
- A NICU stay of any length puts a large amount of stress on a relationship. Remember to share thoughts, feelings, information and hard tasks with each other. Remember that you both want what is best for your baby.

Stay close to me...

...forever!



When you and your baby go home, keep doing the same things you learned in the NICU with all your children:

Gentle touch, hand hugs, kangaroo care for your baby, good nutrition, reading, playing, bonding and loving.

March of Dimes Mission

To improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.



Funds research
aimed at preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality



Helps moms
have full-term pregnancies and healthy babies



Supports families
by comforting them when their baby needs help to survive and thrive