

“Kangaroo Care” in the NICU

SAINT BARNABAS MEDICAL CENTER
NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

Kangaroo Care, also called skin-to-skin care, is a special way for you to hold your baby against your bare chest. Your baby will wear only a diaper and hat, and you will hold your baby in an upright position so that his or her ear is just above your heart beat. Your nurse will assist you to a comfortable position in a chair. Plan for at least 60 minutes.

What are the benefits of Kangaroo Care?

- It helps your baby regulate body temperature, heart rate and breathing
- Babies who kangaroo have longer times of deep sleep, which helps them grow
- Your baby may gain weight faster and may breastfeed better. It can also increase breast milk production
- If done during painful procedures like heel sticks, it could help reduce the pain your baby feels
- It could help you bond with your baby. Your baby will hear your heartbeat and feel your warmth and love

When can my baby start Kangaroo Care?

- If your baby is born at less than 32 weeks gestation, their head must remain still for 72 hours. After that, your baby may kangaroo if he has no umbilical lines or chest tubes, is no longer on an oscillator ventilator, and is medically stable.
- If your baby is 32 weeks gestation or more, your baby may kangaroo if he is not on an oscillator ventilator, has no umbilical lines or chest tubes, and is medically stable.

What else should I know?

- Kangaroo Care is best when done for a minimum of an hour, so that your baby gets all the benefits Kangaroo Care has to offer.
- If your baby is not able to kangaroo, you can still provide meaningful touch with hand hugs or help with two-person care.
- Please wear clothing that opens in the front so your baby can be easily positioned against your bare skin. We can give you a hospital gown if you are not wearing easy access clothing. Use the restroom before and have a drink of water handy.
- Avoid wearing perfumes or smelling like cigarette smoke so that your baby’s immature sensory system will not be irritated.
- It may take some time for your baby to adjust to kangaroo care. You may see desaturations, fussy movements, and an increase in oxygen needed in the first 15 minutes or so.

- The nurse will observe and monitor your baby's vital signs closely to make sure that your baby is tolerating kangaroo care.
- Sometimes the nurse will have you return your baby to his incubator if his vital signs and oxygen requirements show that he is not tolerating Kangaroo Care. We encourage you to try again soon if this happens.
- Please be present and do not use your phone while doing Kangaroo Care.
- Please ask your nurse or doctor if you have any other questions.
- **We recommend you do Kangaroo Care EARLY and OFTEN!**

If you have any further questions, please ask your nurse or doctor.