

*Kangaroo care is skin-to-skin touch between a parent and their baby. Read about the various ways you can provide kangaroo care and the many benefits of skin-to-skin contact with your baby.*

## Key points

- Parents should have skin-to-skin contact with their baby as often and for as long as possible.
- Having skin-to-skin contact with your baby provides many health benefits for both you and your baby.
- Ask your health-care team when you can hold your baby skin-to-skin.

## What is kangaroo care?

Kangaroo care is also known as skin-to-skin contact.

During kangaroo care, your baby will wear only a diaper, and they will be placed on your bare chest. Any parent can provide kangaroo care. If your baby's health condition prevents you from holding them, there are modified forms of kangaroo care that you can do.



## How to provide kangaroo care

Before you begin kangaroo care with your baby, it is important you are prepared and your baby is ready. This will allow you to be skin-to-skin with your baby for as long as possible without any interruptions. Kangaroo care should last for a minimum of **60 minutes** but can last for several hours.

## Supplies you may need for kangaroo care include

- A comfortable chair
- A pillow and a blanket
- A wrap or clothes to wrap yourself and your baby in

If you need help gathering these supplies, your nurse will be able to help you.

You and your baby's nurse can help to prepare your baby for kangaroo care by providing any other necessary care to them beforehand, such as changing their diaper.

## Before beginning kangaroo care

- If you are expressing breast milk, it is ideal to pump before and right after kangaroo care.
- Use the washroom, eat and drink, and wash your hands.
- Wear a top that opens in the front so that there is as much skin-to-skin contact between you and your baby as possible. You may wear a bra if that is more comfortable for you, a nurse can also provide you with a gown.

## During kangaroo care

- Your baby will be wearing only a diaper and, sometimes, a hat.
- Once you are seated comfortably, your nurse will help transfer your baby to your bare chest and teach you the best way to position and hold them.
- A blanket, wrap or clothes can be used to keep you and your baby warm.

## The power of touch

Kangaroo care offers many benefits for parents and babies.

For parents, kangaroo care can:

- decrease their stress
- increase bonding with their baby
- increase confidence in caring for their baby
- help parents feel they are part of the health-care team
- decrease risk of postpartum depression

Benefits specific to lactation include:

- increased milk supply
- easier transition to breastfeeding

Benefits for your baby include:

- helping to regulate their breathing, heart rate and temperature
- preparing your baby for breastfeeding
- decreasing pain during painful procedures
- helping with sleep and brain development
- decreasing stress and crying

## Modified kangaroo care

There are other ways you can have skin-to-skin contact with your baby if your baby's health condition does not allow you to hold them. These include:

- finger holding
- hand hugging
- encircling



### Finger holding

The parent places one finger in their baby's hand for them to grasp.



### Encircling or nesting

The parent wraps both of their arms around their baby's body in the crib.



### Hand hugging

The parent places both hands on their baby, with one hand cupping the feet and the other hand cupping the head.



### Hand hugging

The parent rests both hands gently on their baby's torso.

## Resources

To watch videos on how to perform kangaroo care, please visit:

<http://www.sickkids.ca/breastfeeding-program/videos/index.html>

For further resources on kangaroo care and breastfeeding, please visit:

[www.sickkids.ca/breastfeeding-program/index.html](http://www.sickkids.ca/breastfeeding-program/index.html)