

PREMATURE NEWBORN CARE: KANGAROO CARE

TRANSCRIPT

The practical ways you comfort your baby and promote her development, help her medically as well as emotionally. When a baby is stressed, she experiences changes in her heart rate and breathing. Less oxygen may make it to her bloodstream. This affects her stability and her brain health, too.

One of the best ways parents nurture their baby is with what is called kangaroo care. Much like a baby kangaroo, who slips into his mother's warm pouch, your early born baby comes to rest skin-to-skin on your chest. Just as she did in the womb, here she is able to take advantage of your body heat, and feel and hear the reassuring rhythm of your heartbeat. The closeness, warmth and smells that a baby senses while skin to skin with a parent will help him to feel at ease and to sleep.

Babies tend to fuss less in this position and have fewer episodes of apnea – that is, interrupted breathing. Breathing becomes more regular. Your heart rate and your baby's synchronize and the level of oxygen in her blood goes up – all signs that your baby's brain is getting the stability and calm it needs.

"What I find, is that my daughters tend to saturate really well when they're kangarooing, and they fall asleep and pull their arms in close and they're just out. And it's a nice feeling to know that I'm doing something physically to help with their development."

Babies aren't the only ones who respond well to skin-to-skin contact in the NICU. Mothers and fathers do, too.

"At first it was really scary for us, because he was very small and there was a lot of machinery attached to him. But once he would get nestled down on your chest, the vent tube went away. Everything went away and you just had, you know, your son there. And actually, most of the time we would just sleep. But it was some of the best sleep I got and hopefully some good sleep for him."

"The kangarooing that we've done gives us the best feeling in the world. It's incredible. We just can't even describe it in words. And it definitely helps her. She just seems so calm when we do it, and we notice her weight gain is much better on the days after we've been here kangarooing. So we know the research is there, but we know it from personal experience."

Many parents say that kangaroo care helped them to realize that there was something they could do for their baby that no one else could.