

## **Kangaroo care - Information for parents.**

### **What is kangaroo care?**

Kangaroo care means placing baby, just in their nappy and perhaps a hat, skin to skin against the parent's chest. The baby is then also covered with a blanket and/or parent's shirt.

### **What are the benefits of kangaroo care?**

Studies have shown that kangaroo care has many benefits for both babies and parents, including:

- helping baby regulate their breathing, temperature and heartbeat
- getting breastfeeding off to a good start and increasing the mother's breastmilk supply
- helping both parents to develop their relationship with their baby and making both parents and baby happier
- helping to conserve baby's energy and aiding baby's brain and emotional development
- longer-term benefits for baby, such as a greater weight gain and a calmer, more settled baby
- earlier transfer home

### **How to have kangaroo care with baby**

- baby should be undressed to their nappy and placed between their mothers breasts or on their father's chest, in an upright position
- baby should then be covered to keep them warm
- baby should have their head turned to one side in a slightly upturned position, to help them breathe easily and allow their parents to have eye contact with their baby
- baby's arms and legs should be flexed
- baby's tummy should be level with the parents sternum, so baby's face is uncovered at all times
- baby should be secured to make sure they can't slip out, with their parent sitting in a comfortable reclining chair or similar
- kangaroo care should last for at least an hour, to be really effective

**To make kangaroo care easier for parents and baby, wearing the following clothing can be helpful:**

- a button-up top or shirt with low neckline, made of soft stretchable fabric
- a loose fronted top or hospital gown
- it is also helpful for mothers to remove their bra before Kangaroo Care, which will allow baby to have more contact with their skin

**Kangaroo care and breastfeeding**

During kangaroo care baby may start to show some feeding cues such as moving their mouth, turning their head, rooting, sucking their hand or fingers. This is an ideal time for baby to be breastfed, as kangaroo care encourages babies to feed. A member of the ward staff will help mothers to position their baby at their breast, so they can continue to enjoy skin-to-skin with baby whilst they feed.

**Can I still have kangaroo care if I smoke?**

If you or your partner smoke then your baby is exposed to the risks of passive smoking. You should wash your hands and remove any outer clothing following smoking and before recommencing kangaroo care. There is no evidence to say how long after having a cigarette it is safe to be near a baby. If you would like help to stop smoking please speak to a member of staff or visit the Trust's "Stopping Smoking in Pregnancy" webpage.

**For more information about kangaroo care, ask a member of staff or visit the Baby Friendly Initiative's website and search for "Kangaroo Care".**

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