



No one holds your baby with more love than you do. That's why you should hold your baby as much as you can.



UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center is a "hospital within a hospital" providing comprehensive services to children throughout the region. With more than 100 medical and surgical specialists skilled in and devoted to the care of children, the Children's Medical Center offers a full range of care to infants, children and adolescents in a close-to-home environment that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of families. The Children's Medical Center is a member of the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, a nonprofit organization that promotes the health and well-being of children and their families through support of children's hospitals and health systems that are committed to excellence in providing health care to children. Visit www.umassmemorial.org/children for more information.



UMass Memorial Health Care is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central New England with more than 13,000 employees and nearly 2,000 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. Our member hospitals and entities include Clinton Hospital, HealthAlliance Hospital, Marlborough Hospital, UMass Memorial Medical Center, Wing Memorial Hospital and Medical Centers and Community Healthlink, our behavioral health agency. With our teaching and research partner, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, our extensive primary care network and our Cancer, Diabetes, Heart and Vascular, and Musculoskeletal Centers of Excellence we deliver seamless programs of quality and compassionate care for patients across our health care system.

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Kangaroo Care: A Guide to Skin-to-Skin Holding





“Having a baby in the NICU was tough because it felt as if I was imposing when I did the “normal” parenting things. However, about a day after my son was born, they put him on my chest with a warming blanket over both of us. All those mixed feelings — frustration and disappointment and lack of confidence in my ability to parent this fragile little person — just melted away as I felt his warm body against my chest.”

~ NICU Mom

“I cannot express how much Kangaroo Care helped me emotionally deal with what was happening. The physical bond between my son and I was broken very unexpectedly and prematurely when he was born. Kangaroo Care allowed us to feel close once again and to start building an emotional bond that will endure for our entire lives.”

~ NICU Mom

What is Kangaroo Care?

Kangaroo Care, also known as skin-to-skin holding, is a special way of holding your baby against your chest so that you and your baby have close contact with each other. The baby looks like he/she is in a pouch on your chest like a kangaroo. Kangaroo Care is used in neonatal intensive care units throughout the world to support parent-infant bonding. We encourage both moms and dads to try this method.

When can I hold my baby?

Our goal is for you to touch and hold your baby as soon as he/she is ready. Each baby’s medical needs are different. Usually, readiness for holding is determined by how well your baby responds to handling and care.

How is skin-to-skin holding different from swaddled holding?

With swaddled holding, your baby is wrapped in one or two blankets and placed in your arms. With skin-to-skin holding, your baby wears only a diaper and is placed upright on your bare chest. Both of you are covered, either by wrapping your shirt around your baby or having a blanket placed over both of you. Whichever type of holding you choose, your baby’s nurse makes sure you both feel comfortable and safe.

Why should I hold my baby skin-to-skin?

Skin-to-skin holding has benefits for both parents and babies:

- Parents say they feel closer to their baby and more confident.
- Mother’s milk supply increases.
- Babies stay warm and breathe more easily in this position.
- Successful breast-feeding is promoted.
- Babies may sleep better after holding and conserve more calories for growth.
- Stress related to parent–infant separation may be reduced.

Kangaroo Care also can be done with babies on ventilators. Many parents have made this experience a special part of this earliest time in their baby’s life. Kangaroo Care is beneficial throughout your baby’s hospitalization and beyond! We encourage you to hold your baby skin-to-skin even after he/she is out of the isolette and clothed. When breast-feeding or after bottle feeding, remove the blankets and hold your baby very close.

More information

For more information about Kangaroo Care, ask your nurse.