

Kangaroo Care

Kangaroo Care as it is most often referred to, was implemented in the country Columbia in the early 1980's by a couple of physicians. Columbia's hospitals were often overcrowded and they did not have enough incubators to support babies born prematurely. In the USA Neonatal Intensive Care Units were no where near what they are today. Many, many families did not have the option of a NICU because they could not afford extensive hospitalizations or simply because there was a lack of staff and equipment to run adequate NICU's.

So, what do parents do when they don't have the financial support or resources to have their premature baby in a NICU? Okay, get ready for this...they strip their baby of his or her clothing to the diaper and then places the baby against the mother or father's bare chest. After that, the baby and parent are covered up they go about their business.

Sounds a bit strange doesn't it? It may sound strange, but the mortality rate of these infants in Columbia dropped nearly 40% which is miraculous considering the fact that there is very little to no invasive intervention with this method. Many studies have been done on "kangarooing" and there have been no real negative effects of this type of bonding. In fact, most of the studies support kangaroo care. The following are some of the benefits of Kangaroo Care:

- A deeper and much needed sleep for the baby
- Lower oxygen requirements and deeper oxygen saturation
- Fewer spells of apnea (apnea is when the baby stops breathing for a little while)
- Fewer spells of bradycardia (slow heart rate) which generally means a heart rate that drops below 100 beats per minute lasting longer than 15 seconds

- The infant can maintain its temperature easier which is often difficult for babies born prematurely
- The infant will be able to gain weight more quickly
- Babies remain calmer because they can hear their mother or father's heartbeat
- Stronger bond occurs between parent and child, which is very needed during this difficult time
- The infant will have longer periods of alertness

These are some of the major benefits of Kangarooing with your baby. Kangaroo Care tends to make a baby feel more like they are back in the womb. They are comforted by listening to their parents' heartbeat. Sometimes, a baby's health may be too fragile to give Kangaroo Care and the NICU staff may not suggest it or be hesitant. If you feel your baby can handle it, and you want to give Kangaroo Care, you should discuss this with your baby's NICU staff and ask them to let you try.

Here are some quotes from parents who have given Kangaroo Care to their babies: