

Kangaroo Cuddles

HISTORY: Kangaroo cuddling (also known as Kangaroo care) was pioneered in Columbia in the 1970s by a paediatrician who was looking for a way to keep premature babies warm in an area too poor to have incubators.

Prior to this many paediatricians believed premature babies needed to be isolated to conserve their strength. Inspiration was taken from kangaroos and other marsupials that nurture their young in a pouch.

Once babies are well enough, they are taken out of their incubators and placed on their parent's chest, usually under their clothes, so the baby gets skin-to-skin contact and can hear and feel the parent's heartbeat.

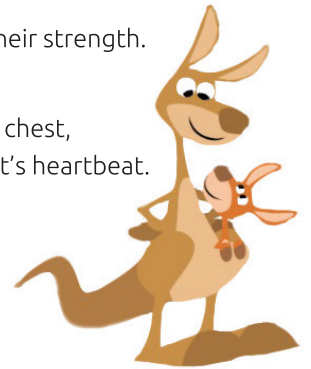
It works

Kangaroo cuddling has now become much more than a way to keep babies warm. Babies generally improve when they're being held by their parents.

They've been listening to your voices in the womb and even the smallest babies recognise their parents tone of voice and speech patterns.

Multiple studies have proven that it has a number of benefits for parents and for babies including:

- Fewer breathing problems
- Faster weight gain
- Less energy-wasting fidgeting
- A more constant body temperature



Important note for parents

- If you have a very young or sick baby, ask your nurse if your baby is ready for kangaroo cuddles. If your baby is not yet ready then you can still read to your baby as this encourages bonding and relaxation – your baby has heard voices and sounds from inside the womb and continuing this will help both you and your baby
- As with all things in a neonatal unit, hygiene is important. Units will use specialist chairs that clean easily. Also, specialist maternity chairs are often made from material that can't harbour bacteria and germs. In addition, please remember to only kangaroo cuddle when you are in good health yourself
- Talking to your baby while kangaroo cuddling is especially good as the vibrations through your chest assist with bonding and relaxation
- The closeness of kangaroo cuddling provides a warm and soothing environment and helps you feel closer to your baby. This bonding is important for both parent and child – remember, babies pick up on many things and those who are happier tend to be better.

Can you help?

The Neonatal Trust has provided many recliner chairs for neonatal units.

These chairs are great for the long hours spent in the unit and particularly for ultimate comfort when having Kangaroo cuddles. The chairs are covered in hospital grade and hard wearing material. This ensures that they don't wear too quickly and can also be more easily cleaned to ensure optimum hygiene and therefore reduce the chances of a baby picking up bugs and infections.

To help us provide our support such as this example, please head to www.neonataltrust.org.nz/donation

Learn more, and access all of our other support resources, at:

littlemiraclestrust.org.nz/support

The logo for 'the little miracles TRUST'. It features a stylized white heart icon above the text 'the little miracles' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Below this, the word 'TRUST' is written in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.