



A recent [NPR health segment](#) discussed many of the benefits of a popular form of newborn care called kangaroo care. Kangaroo care is when newborn babies are placed on their mother's or father's bare chest instead of in a bassinet or other form of crib. In the segment, a mother named Salma Shabik details her experiences with newborn care after the births of each of her two sons, Elias and Ali. She explains that while Elias was taken from her almost immediately after being born and placed in a bassinet, Ali was instead placed directly onto her chest and given his necessary physical examinations in that position. In her story, Elias cried loudly and had a difficult time settling when he was born, but Ali stopped crying seconds after being placed on his mother's chest. Ali received kangaroo care from his mother, a care method which has been used most often for preterm babies but is gaining popularity with full-term newborns as well.



For a [Today's Parent](#) article, physician and researcher Nils Bergman explains the benefits of kangaroo care, or as many call it, skin-to-skin contact. "The mother's body is the baby's natural habitat, the place where development happens," he says. The placement of the baby on the mother right after birth provides a safe place for baby to be welcomed into the world and begin to develop and make necessary progresses.

Research has been done for [Today's Parent](#) on the benefits of skin-to-skin contact over the past few decades as it became more common in hospitals in the United States. Studies have found that skin-to-skin contact:

- Helps prevent the baby's blood sugar from getting too low
- Stabilizes premature babies more quickly than an incubator
- Helps increase milk production in mothers
- Encourages breastfeeding and helps babies latch and feed more effectively



- Reduces the amount babies cry
- Helps premature babies gain weight better
- Maintains the baby's temperature better than other methods
- Relieves pain or discomfort for babies experiencing tests or procedures
- Stabilizes a premature baby's breathing and heart rate
- Promotes a strong bond between mothers and babies

The above studies were done on babies and their mothers, but many of these benefits can also be achieved through skin-to-skin contact with fathers or partners as well. Furthermore, skin-to-skin contact between fathers or partners and newborn babies can help create a better bond between them. This happens because the physical touch between parents and a new baby releases oxytocin, which is an important chemical released in the brain that helps build relationships. Maintaining high levels of oxytocin with a newborn creates a bond between the two that provides safety, contentment, and comfort with one another. For this reason doctors, midwives, and other professionals present at birth may suggest that each parent provide skin-to-skin contact with the newborn. Especially in cases where the mother is in recovery or is separated from the baby for medical reasons, it may be encouraged that another person hold the newborn with skin-to-skin contact.

Though beneficial, skin-to-skin contact or kangaroo care may not always be permitted, especially in situations where the newborn needs to be cared for in the NICU after birth. For this reason, it is best to request skin-to-skin contact with your baby and wait until medical professionals have given permission.

Disclaimer

This page is intended solely as an educational tool for parents. It is not intended as – and should not be mistaken for – medical advice.

Sources

- [NPR: Kangaroo Care Helps Premies and Full-Term Babies Too](#)



- [Today's Parent: Skin to skin with Baby](#)
- [She Knows Pregnancy and Baby: Skin-to-skin with Daddy](#)
- [What to Expect: Men and Oxytocin, Creating an "Attachment" to Nurture Your Newborn Baby](#)
- [Science.gov: Kangaroo Care Records](#)
- [Cochrane Review: Early Skin-to-Skin contact for Mothers and their Healthy Newborn Infants](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics: Skin-to-Skin Care for Term and Preterm Infants in the Neonatal ICU](#)
- [The Effects of Kangaroo Care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit on the Physiological Functions of Preterm Infants, Maternal-Infant Attachment, and Maternal Stress](#)
- [Promoting Neuroprotective Care in Neonatal Intensive Care Units and Preterm Infant Development: Insights From the Neonatal Adequate Care for Quality of Life Study](#)
- [Kangaroo Care for the Preterm Infant and Family](#)