



Kangaroo Care

.....
The power, benefits and
impact of skin-to-skin care
for newborns, parents and
families



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Close To Me



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-Introductions of class participants

- Before we start, has anyone touched, hand-swaddled or held their baby or done skin-to-skin? What was it like the first time? For those of you who have not held your baby, does anyone feel nervous about it? What is the worry about? What do you think could happen? Is anyone excited? Tell about that....
- While it is natural to have some anxieties about getting close to your baby in the NICU, we want you to feel excited and prepared to touch, hold, or even do skin-to-skin holding with your baby. We hope to provide information and support to you so that these things will happen comfortably and safely between you and your baby.
- (Try to have a co-leader who can respond to any major parent concerns (infection or safety issues) or let parents know if this will be addressed later during the session)*

Stay close to me with...

...gentle, still touch.



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2. Stay close to me with... gentle, still, touch:

- Gentle, still touch is very important, even for the most sick and fragile of babies. Your baby knows your voice and smell, and will be comforted when these things are accompanied with your gentle touch.
- It might feel natural for you to stroke your baby, but stroking is often too much stimulation for babies in the NICU. Many times, they are not quite ready for all the stimulation of life outside the womb. Still touch is best.
- Be sure to follow the NICU hand washing guidelines before touching your baby.
- Try to make sure your hands are warm when they touch your baby.
- Practice gentle, still, touch on the baby doll.*

Stay close to me with...

...hand swaddling.



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3. Stay close to me with... hand swaddling:

- Hand Swaddling can be performed on very sick and fragile babies too, especially those not yet ready for skin to skin or kangaroo care. Has anyone done this?
- Place very light pressure on your baby's head with one hand and cup their feet gently with the other hand.
- We often call this giving your baby a "hand hug."
- This can sometimes calm a fussy baby.
- For those of you who have hand swaddled, what was that like?
- Parents benefit from hand swaddling because they can feel their baby breathe and see him/her calmed by their touch.
- Practice hand swaddling on the baby doll.*

Stay close to me with...



...skin-to-skin holding.

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(Picture of a dad from Arkansas)

4. Stay close to me with... skin-to-skin holding

- Does anyone know what Kangaroo Care is? Do you know where it began?
- Actually it was developed in South America where physicians looked around the NICU where they did not have heated incubators and asked “What are the heat sources for the premature babies?” And they saw the mothers and fathers sitting lovingly at the bedsides.
- “Skin-to-skin holding” is a way to hold your baby so that there is as much skin contact between your baby and yourself as possible. You may sometimes hear this called “Kangaroo Care.”
- For skin-to-skin holding, a baby is usually unclothed (but might be wearing a diaper and hat); and placed upright against a parent’s bare chest. Once your baby graduates to wearing clothes on a regular basis, you can still undress him and hold skin-to-skin.
- The baby is positioned with his/her limbs flexed, head with one ear over the parent’s heart, and hands close to his/her mouth.
- Place a warmed blanket over your baby to preserve body temperature.
- It is advisable to wear a loose shirt that buttons down the front for skin-to-skin holding sessions.
- Rocking in a rocking chair may be too much stimulation for your baby. Ask your nurse if your chair has a locking mechanism.
- It is best if skin-to-skin holding times are for an extended period (at least one hour) to allow your baby time to fall into a deep sleep. Be sure to go to the restroom and take care of phone calls before you start your skin-to-skin holding time with your baby so that you will have uninterrupted time to focus just on your baby.
- Avoid strong smells such as perfume, scented lotion, body odor, paint or chemicals.
- If you are a smoker, do not smoke just prior to holding your baby; and bring a fresh shirt to the hospital to wear. Even the smoke on clothing can have an effect on your baby.
- Practice skin-to-skin holding on the baby doll.

Benefits to your baby

Skin-to-skin holding is good for your baby's health because it often can:

- Keep a baby warm
- Stabilize a baby's heart rate
- Help a baby gain weight
- Reduce discomfort a baby may feel



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(Next 2 slides are pictures of a mom from Texas)

(Next two slides use language directly from the CTM flyer – a good time to pass this out in class)

5. Benefits to your baby with skin-to-skin/kangaroo care:

It often can:

- Keep a baby warm
- Stabilize a baby's heart rate
- Help a baby gain weight
- Reduce discomfort a baby may feel
- Can you think of other benefits?

Benefits to you

Kangaroo care is good for moms and dads, too, because:

- It can help you bond with your baby.
- Holding your baby may increase your milk supply.
- It can reduce your stress and lift your spirits.
- It may help you become more confident parents.
- You are a vital part of your baby's care.



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6. Benefits to you with skin-to-skin/kangaroo care:

Kangaroo care is good for moms and dads, too, because:

- It can help you bond with your baby
- Holding your baby may increase your milk supply
- It can reduce stress and lift spirits
- It may help you become more confident parents
- You are a vital part of your baby's care
- *Take this time to stop and encourage discussion. Many parents feel alone in their thoughts, and it's helpful to know others feel the same way.*

Stay close to me by...

...breastfeeding me or giving me a bottle with breastmilk or formula, when I'm ready.



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7. Stay close to me by... when I'm ready, breastfeeding me or giving me a bottle with breast milk or formula

- You may have already determined whether you will be breastfeeding, providing breast milk or giving formula to your baby. No matter what you decide, feeding your baby is a wonderful way to get close to your child.

- If you have not decided whether to provide breast milk for your baby, it's important to know that breast milk is the best food for most babies. Breast milk contains all the nutrients a baby needs for healthy growth and development during the first six months of life, as well as substances that help protect a baby from many illnesses. Breastfeeding provides health benefits for the mother, including earlier return to her pre-pregnancy weight. And there are emotional benefits for mother and baby from the breastfeeding process.

- The March of Dimes urges all new mothers to breastfeed if they are able. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that a baby be breastfed for at least twelve months. However, even babies who breastfeed for only a short period of time experience health benefits.

- Breast milk also contains substances called antibodies that help protect a baby from many illnesses. Studies show that breastfed babies are less likely than formula-fed babies to have ear infections, lower-respiratory infections (such as pneumonia and bronchiolitis), meningitis, urinary tract infections and diarrhea. Studies also suggest that breastfed babies may be less likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Breast milk is easy for a baby to digest, so the baby may have less gas and discomfort than a formula-fed baby.

- The health benefits of breastfeeding can last a lifetime. Some studies suggest that children and adults who were breastfed are less likely to develop asthma, insulin-dependent diabetes and certain cancers (leukemia, lymphoma and Hodgkin's disease). Babies who were breastfed may be less likely to become obese later in life.

- Who should not breastfeed their baby?

Breastfeeding is recommended for the vast majority of mothers and babies. However, there are a few exceptions. Women in the United States who have HIV (human immunodeficiency virus, the virus that causes AIDS) should not breastfeed because they can pass the virus on to their babies in their breast milk. Women who have active tuberculosis and who have not been treated with medications should not breastfeed. A woman with an illness, such as the flu, usually does not need to interrupt breastfeeding because she will pass along antibodies to her baby that will help protect him from the illness.

- If you are not feeling well or are taking any medications, consult with your doctor if you should continue to breastfeed.

- Many [premature](#) or sick babies cannot feed from the breast right away. However, the benefits of breast milk, including protection from many diseases, may be especially crucial for these babies. Mothers can use a breast pump to express their milk so that the milk can be fed to their babies through a tube or with a dropper.

- Your Doctor may require you to supplement your breast milk if your baby is very premature.

- If you decide to use formula, formula now is made to have many vital nutrients for your baby. Make feeding time a special time to connect with and be close to your baby!

Stay close to me by...

...reading me a story.



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8. Stay close to me by... reading me a story

- Your baby knows your voice and will be comforted by hearing your soft, soothing, familiar voice.
- Throughout infancy, toddler hood, and childhood, reading will be one of the most important things you can do with your child. It's never too early to start this form of interaction and bonding with your child.
- In the NICU, babies at thirty weeks are typically ready to hear you read to them. When your baby is quiet and alert, he/she will be interested in your soft, soothing voice. This would be the perfect time to read a short book to your baby! If your baby looks tired or over stimulated, it might be time for a break from reading. Ask your nurse what your baby's expressions and hand movements mean.
- Books are great first toys for babies. Look for books that:
 - Have pictures in bright contrasting colors
 - Are made of cardboard or cloth for durability
 - Have pictures of other babies' faces
- If your NICU has a bedside reading or lending library, this is a great time to mention it.*

Stay close to my...

...brothers and sisters, too!



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(Note to presenter: depending on your hospital's sibling visitation policy, you may need to remove this slide, or modify the language to compliment the NICU rules.)

9. Stay close to my brothers and sisters too!

- Take photos of family members holding your baby, and put them on the refrigerator / computer screen for all family members to enjoy at home.
- If siblings have show and tell at school, provide footprints or a photo of their baby sister / brother being held to take to school.
- Using foot prints, hand prints or a mold set, create a personal "hand hug" gift from baby to big brother / sister.
- Begin the teaching process early with siblings about how they will need to wash their hands and how / when they'll be able to hold their new baby sister or brother.
- Make the first time a sibling gets to visit and / or hold their new brother / sister a memorable moment -- take photographs, make a sign about "My big brother / sister loves me," etc
- And even though it might be hard, spend time with your older children outside the NICU. They need and miss you. Reassure them how important they are to you and how much you love them. This is a difficult time for your kids too.

Stay close to your partner.



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10. Stay close to your partner.

- Skin-to-skin holding is family bonding time. Allow these moments to be very special times for your family – focus together on your baby. When your baby is quiet and alert, talk softly together to him/her. Don't fight over time holding your baby. Recognize that each of you needs time to touch, hold and skin-to-skin your baby alone and as a couple. Give your partner alone time to enjoy this activity. When there, offer to take photos while your partner holds the baby.
- Have a nurse take photos of this special family time – they will be treasures to you!
- Set aside private time for just you and your partner to be together, away from the NICU and away from other family members.
- A NICU stay of any length puts a large amount of stress on a relationship; regardless of how healthy the relationship was beforehand. Remember to share thoughts, feelings, information and burdensome tasks with each other. Lean on each other's strengths and forgive weaknesses. Recognize that you both want what is best for your baby.

Stay close to me...

...forever!



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(PHOTO: In the NICU, and years later, NFS Specialist from Nebraska, Abby with daughter Ava)

11. Stay close to me... forever!

- When you and your baby go home, continue the same practices you're learning in the NICU with all your children: gentle touch, hand hugs, skin-to-skin holding for infants, good nutrition, reading, playing, bonding and loving.