

# 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 doctors believed premature babies needed to be left alone 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 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 their voices in the womb and babies can recognise their families tone of voice and speech patterns.

Multiple studies have proved 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

Talking or reading while kangaroo cuddling is especially good as the vibrations through the chest assist with bonding and relaxation. Also, it helps parents to feel closer to their baby. This bonding is important for both parent and child and helps babies improve – as babies who are happier tend to do better.

As with all things in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), hygiene is important. Units will use specialist chairs that are easy to clean and these specialist maternity chairs are made from material that can't harbour bacteria and germs.

