

## **Kangaroo Mother Care: An Approach to Early Parenting and Infant Health**

Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) is a method of caring for premature or low birth weight infants, promoting skin-to-skin contact between the mother and her newborn. The practice originated in Colombia in the late 1970s as a response to the challenges faced in providing traditional incubator care for preterm infants, especially in resource-limited settings. The technique involves placing the diaper-clad baby on the mother's bare chest, creating a secure and warm environment that mimics the kangaroo's pouch. This close contact not only regulates the baby's temperature but also facilitates bonding, breastfeeding, and overall well-being.

In recent years, Kangaroo Mother Care has gained global recognition for its effectiveness in improving health outcomes for preterm infants. Numerous studies have highlighted its positive impact on weight gain, breastfeeding success, and the reduction of infections. As a low-cost and accessible intervention, KMC has become a cornerstone in neonatal care, fostering a strong emotional connection between parents and their newborns while contributing to the overall health and development of premature infants. This article will explore the history, benefits, and practices of Kangaroo Mother Care, shedding light on its transformative role in enhancing neonatal care practices worldwide.

Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) has transcended its initial focus on premature or low birth weight infants and has found application in caring for normal birth weight babies as well. The principles of KMC, particularly the emphasis on skin-to-skin contact, bonding, and breastfeeding, have been recognized as beneficial for the overall well-being of all newborns, regardless of their weight at birth. This extension of KMC to normal birth weight babies underscores its versatility and the acknowledgment of its broader advantages in promoting emotional attachment, regulating body temperature, and supporting breastfeeding initiation. The practice has evolved beyond a targeted intervention for vulnerable infants to become a universally valued approach, fostering a deeper connection between parents and their newborns and contributing to the holistic development of infants in various healthcare settings globally.

When mothers are discharged from the hospital, the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) initiative can seamlessly continue at home, ensuring the ongoing well-being and bonding between the mother and her newborn. Encouraging skin-to-skin contact during daily routines, such as feeding and napping, helps maintain the warmth and closeness established in the hospital setting. Providing mothers with guidance on implementing KMC practices at home, including creating a comfortable environment for skin-to-skin contact and emphasizing the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, can empower them to integrate KMC seamlessly into their daily lives. Additionally, involving other family members in the process can contribute to a supportive home environment, fostering a strong foundation for the continued success of KMC beyond the hospital setting. Regular check-ins and support from healthcare professionals can further enhance the mother's confidence and ensure the sustained positive impact of Kangaroo Mother Care in the home environment.

### **Can the father do skin-to-skin kangaroo care?**

Yes, the father can actively participate in the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) initiative. While the practice traditionally involves the mother providing skin-to-skin contact, fathers can also play a crucial role in fostering the physical and emotional well-being of the newborn. Fathers can engage in KMC by holding the baby close to their bare chest, creating a warm and secure environment that promotes bonding. This involvement not only strengthens the father-infant

relationship but also provides the baby with the same benefits of skin-to-skin contact, including temperature regulation and a sense of security. Encouraging fathers to participate in KMC not only contributes to the shared responsibility of caregiving but also enhances the overall family bond, making it a valuable and inclusive practice for both parents.

### **The step-by-step of skin-to-skin mother care**

1. **Prepare a Comfortable Environment:** Find a quiet and warm room, free from distractions, to create a comfortable setting for KMC. Ensure that the room temperature is suitable for the baby.
2. **Undress the Baby:** Gently undress the baby, leaving only a diaper on. This maximizes skin-to-skin contact and allows for better regulation of the baby's body temperature.
3. **Position the Baby:** Place the baby vertically against the mother's bare chest, with the baby's chest against his. The baby's head should be turned to the side, and the nose and mouth should be unobstructed for easy breathing.
4. **Cover Both Mother and Baby:** Use a blanket or a shawl to cover both the mother and the baby, ensuring they stay warm during the skin-to-skin contact.
5. **Ensure a Secure Hold:** Encourage the mother to support the baby securely with her hands, or better still the skin-to-skin wrapper, cradling the baby's head and neck. This helps maintain a stable and comfortable position for both.
6. **Encourage Relaxation:** Both the mother and the baby should be encouraged to relax during this time. This helps to release oxytocin, promoting bonding and reducing stress.
7. **Monitor the Baby:** Keep a close eye on the baby's well-being, observing for signs of contentment, adequate breathing, and warmth.

Skin-to-skin Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) offers a range of benefits for both the newborn and the mother, contributing to their physical and emotional well-being. Some key advantages include:

1. **Temperature Regulation:** The close skin-to-skin contact helps regulate the baby's body temperature, reducing the risk of hypothermia, especially crucial for premature or low birth weight infants.
2. **Stabilization of Vital Signs:** KMC has been shown to stabilize the baby's heart rate, respiratory rate, and oxygen saturation levels, promoting overall physiological stability.
3. **Improved Breastfeeding Success:** Skin-to-skin contact encourages breastfeeding initiation and success. The proximity to the mother's breast stimulates the baby's instinct to latch, leading to increased milk production and better weight gain.
4. **Enhanced Bonding and Attachment:** The physical closeness during KMC promotes the release of oxytocin, often referred to as the "bonding hormone." This contributes to the development of a strong emotional bond between the baby and the caregiver, whether it's the mother or father.
5. **Reduced Stress and Cortisol Levels:** KMC has a calming effect on both the baby and the mother, reducing stress levels and cortisol release. This calm environment is conducive to better sleep and overall well-being.
6. **Faster Weight Gain:** Studies have shown that infants who receive KMC tend to gain weight more rapidly than those who do not, which is particularly beneficial for premature or low birth weight babies.
7. **Enhanced Brain Development:** The emotional security provided by skin-to-skin contact can positively influence neurodevelopment, contributing to improved cognitive and emotional outcomes for the baby.

8. **Decreased Incidence of Infections:** Physical contact and close monitoring during KMC have been associated with a reduced risk of infections in newborns, providing an added layer of protection.
9. **Parental Confidence and Involvement:** KMC involves both parents, fostering shared responsibility and confidence in caregiving. This inclusivity strengthens the family unit and promotes a supportive environment for the newborn.
10. **Adaptability to Home Environment:** The practices learned during hospital-based KMC can be easily adapted to the home environment, providing ongoing benefits for the baby's development and family bonding.

### **Precaution when doing skin-to-skin KMC**

While skin-to-skin Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) is generally safe and highly beneficial, there are certain precautions and considerations to ensure the well-being of both the baby and the caregiver:

1. **Monitoring Vital Signs:** Continuous monitoring of the baby's vital signs, including heart rate, respiratory rate, and oxygen saturation, is crucial during KMC, especially for infants who may have medical complications.
2. **Stability of the Baby:** Ensure that the baby is stable and does not have any medical conditions that may require immediate attention. Babies with certain health issues may need additional monitoring and care.
3. **Proper Positioning:** Mothers/caregivers must be trained on the correct positioning of the baby during skin-to-skin contact to prevent accidental injuries or discomfort.
4. **Avoidance in Certain Situations:** In some cases, such as when the mother is unwell or on medication that may affect the baby, it may be advisable to postpone or limit skin-to-skin contact.
5. **Excessive Fatigue:** Both the mother and the baby should be well-rested before initiating KMC to prevent excessive fatigue, which could compromise the safety of the baby.
6. **Consideration for Cesarean Section:** Mothers who have undergone a cesarean section should consult with healthcare providers before starting KMC, as there may be specific considerations related to the surgery.
7. **Environmental Factors:** Ensure that the room where KMC is conducted is warm enough to prevent the baby from getting cold. It's essential to maintain a comfortable environment.
8. **Supervision and Support:** In the initial stages, especially for new parents, supervision, and support from experienced caregivers is valuable to ensure that KMC is implemented correctly.
9. **Individualized Care:** Recognize that each baby is unique, and individual circumstances may vary. Tailor KMC practices to the specific needs and conditions of the baby and the mother.

## **How about smoking and the use of phones during the skin-to-skin KMC**

Smoking and the use of phones during skin-to-skin Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) should be approached with caution due to potential risks to the health and well-being of both the baby and the caregiver.

### **1. Smoking:**

- **Avoid Smoking During KMC:** Both parents should refrain from smoking during skin-to-skin contact. Secondhand smoke can be harmful to the baby's respiratory system and overall health.
- **Smoke-Free Environment:** KMC should ideally be conducted in a smoke-free environment to ensure the baby is not exposed to harmful substances. Smoking cessation is encouraged, especially during the immediate postpartum period.

### **2. Use of Phones:**

- **Minimize Distractions:** While using phones during KMC may not pose a direct risk, it's essential to minimize distractions and prioritize the bonding experience. Engaging in phone conversations or prolonged use of electronic devices might detract from the focus needed for attentive caregiving.
- **Ensure Safety:** If a phone is used, ensure that it does not interfere with the secure positioning of the baby and that there is no risk of the device causing harm to the baby.