

Kangaroo Mother Care

In many cases pregnancy results in premature or underweight babies being born. Premature babies often are a result of high blood pressure, excessively high or low levels of amniotic fluid, lack of good nutrition during pregnancy, diabetes, infections as well as tobacco, substance and alcohol use.

Traditionally incubators are used to nurture premature infants into stronger and healthier babies. Premature infants are faced with risks like under developed lungs, risk of infection, as well as jaundice and anaemia in more severe cases.

Although Incubators provide a safe way of treating premature babies, another method has developed called Kangaroo Mother Care. It revolves around three main elements namely, skin to skin contact, Exclusive breastfeeding and medical attention without separation of mother and infant.



Figure 1 - Newborn placed in prone position; net cloth kangaroo binder allows full posture assessment

Kangaroo Mother Care has its origins in 1979 in Columbia when a Dr. Rey and Martinez started the program as a result of a shortage of incubators. Since then it has spread to all parts of the globe and is producing great results in premature infant recovery.

The benefits of Kangaroo Mother Care were found to make babies

- Calmer
- Improve breathing
- Babies are warmer and have a better heart rate than incubator care.
- Improves brain development
- Infant babies were found to feed better from the mother as the method requires the baby to lie in a vertical position on the mother's chest area.

The Western Cape Provincial Department of Health's, regional hospital, Karl Bremer is running a Kangaroo Mother Care programme and it services areas like Kraaifontein, Bishop Lavis, Khayalitsha and more. It started the programme in 2005 and successfully assisted many infants in meaningful premature recovery.

Premature infants face daunting odds for survival, the Kangaroo Mother Care programme has successfully helped to mitigate the risks associated with premature babies. It is our hope that this programme may grow from strength to strength so that it may reach more people in our communities and so doing decrease the infant mortality rate for premature babies.

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Resources:

<http://www.kangaroomothercare.com/>

<http://www.minti.com/parenting-advice/5255/Premature-Babies/>

http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0021-75572006000800014&script=sci_arttext&lng=en (picture)

<http://home.mweb.co.za/to/torngren/eng-berg.html>

Endorsed by The Western Cape Provincial Department of Health