

WakeMed NICU Participates in 2018 Kangaroo Challenge

For the past five years, WakeMed's NICU has participated in the [Kangaroo Challenge from Sunnybrook Hospital in Canada](#). This is an international challenge to see which hospital can log the most hours participating in kangaroo care.

Each year for 15 days, [we 'challenge' our parents with a Kangaroo-A-Thon](#) to kangaroo their babies as usual—but this time to also keep track of those hours. During this time, we also re-educate our staff and families on why kangarooing is so important. This way, we know that we are taking the time to focus on our families, and we are making sure all of our staff is on the same page regarding such an important family-care skill.

What is kangaroo care?

[Kangaroo care](#), also called skin-to-skin care, is when you hold your baby naked or in just a diaper on your bare chest. Holding your baby this way allows him or her to get to know you through your scent, your touch, your voice and the feel of your skin. But, Kangaroo Care doesn't just help you and your baby bond—it helps your little one (or little ones!) get better faster when they are in the NICU!

Kangarooing your baby helps them:

- Sleep better
- Cry less
- Keep his or her body the right temperature
- Move into an open crib sooner
- Breathe better
- Gain weight
- Feel less pain



The Importance of Kangaroo Care

During our Kangaroo-A-Thon, I took some time to sit down and speak with Eda. Eda is the mother to boy/girl twins currently in our NICU who were born at 25 weeks and two days; she takes every chance she gets to kangaroo her babies. I asked Eda why she thinks kangarooing is so important.

It helps me bond with my babies and I know it helps them, and I want to do everything I can to help them. I had to wait 8 days until I could hold either of them. First, I held my son and it was euphoric. I'm sure there is no drug in the world that could make you feel like I did when I was able to kangaroo him. I was able to hold my daughter after 10 days of life. —Eda

Mom's aren't the only ones who can kangaroo! We encourage dads to kangaroo too, and it is just as important for them to participate in skin-to-skin care. Dad's kangaroo quite frequently in the NICU,

and can be very competitive in the Kangaroo-A-Thon, where we give out prizes at the end of the 15 days to honor our families' efforts to care for their babies.

Eda shared about her husband's experience:

My husband kangaroos our babies too. He is pretty cautious... he sees the value in kangarooing but worries that they're fragile. I explain to him that our babies like to be kangarooed and held... that it is what they need. Some days, he's right, it's not the right thing, but overall it's what we are able to do for them to get better.



About Mallory Magelli McKeown

Mallory Magelli McKeown is the Patient and Family Liaison for WakeMed Children's Hospital. If you have questions about ways that you can help support WakeMed's NICU or about family support at WakeMed Children's, please email Mallory at mmagellimckeown@wakemed.org

**Written with help from Eda, a current WakeMed NICU mom of two wonderful twins.*