



Kangaroo care recommended for premature babies

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Columbian physicians describe the use of Kangaroo Mother Care to regulate the temperature of premature babies.

Premature, low birth-weight babies should be strapped to their mothers and fathers during the first few vital months—a technique called Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)—rather than put in incubators, claim Columbian clinicians.

KMC was developed more than 30 years ago in Columbia to provide an alternative to incubators, which were in high demand, and to avoid separating mothers from their newborns. Infants weighing less than 2000 grams at birth were strapped in a semi-upright position to their mother's or father's chest for 24 hours a day, wearing only a bonnet and nappy, to help regulate their body temperature.

As well as financial savings, there is evidence that the technique improves rates of breast-feeding, reduces the severity of infections, and helps bonding between parent and child, explain the authors. Consequently, KMC has become popular in developing countries.

However, Dr Juan Gabrile Ruiz-Peláez, from Javeriana University in Bogotá, who led the research, says affluent countries such as the UK and USA should also adopt KMC as part of standard neonate care.

"It's at least as good as taking care of babies in incubators," he said. "And we are convinced it has distinct advantages—especially regarding the emotional aspects of the relationship between mother and infant."

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