

THE KANGAROO MOTHER CARE CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDE

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[In November 2025 the World Health Organization published and disseminated the technical document *Kangaroo mother care: a clinical practice guide*.](#)

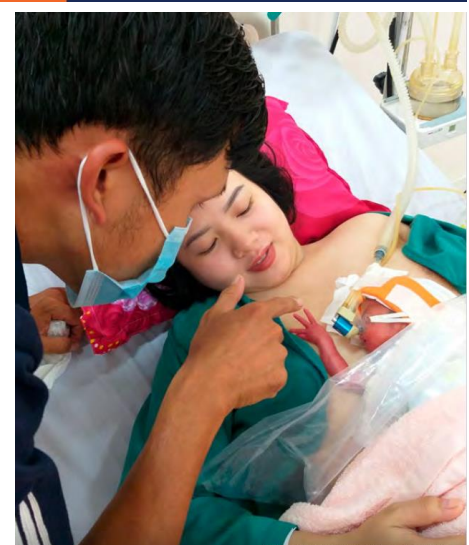
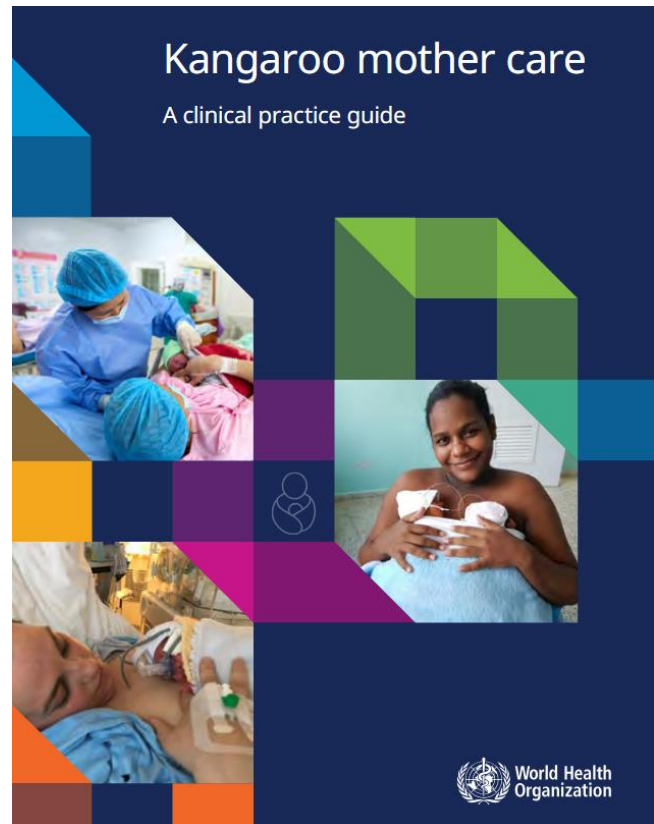
This guide is designed to help health workers support mothers and families in practising Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) in health facilities at all levels of care and at home. It also provides brief guidance for health facility administrators and programme managers on what they need to do to support KMC practice in health facilities.

Kangaroo Mother Care is the term used for care of the preterm and low-birth-weight newborns in prolonged skin-to-skin contact, initiated as soon as possible after birth, with exclusive breast milk feeding.

[The foreword of the Guide underlines that](#) “Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) is a proven, transformative intervention and a cornerstone of care for small and/or sick newborns. When integrated into strong health systems and delivered as part of comprehensive, high-quality newborn care, it improves survival, reduces complications, and supports healthy growth and brain development, strengthens bonding between parent and baby. Scaling up immediate KMC for all preterm or low-birth weight infants from birth, across all levels of care, and into the home, can give even the most vulnerable infants the best possible chance not just to survive, but to thrive. This Guide embodies WHO’s commitment to stand with health workers everywhere, providing practical tools that save lives and improve outcomes. I hope it will inspire action, empower health teams, strengthen systems of care, and accelerate progress towards a future where no newborn dies from preventable causes and every child, everywhere, has the opportunity to reach their full potential.”

This guide is designed to support the development of national policies and guidelines, pre-service and in-service education and training curricula, and health facility protocols for newborn care. It serves as a reference for creating training materials and guiding KMC-related practices, with adaptations possible to suit local contexts, such as resources and case-mix. The guide includes learning and orientation resources, but it is not intended as a standalone training tool. Health workers should acquire practical skills through hands-on training in facilities that practise KMC. The guide assumes the existence of functional health systems that provide essential maternal and newborn care, and that health workers possess the necessary knowledge and skills to care for small and/or sick newborns, in line with the level of care they provide. KMC adaptations based on local experience are highlighted where relevant, enabling health workers to tailor practices to their specific context.

This new guide, published in 2025, [which complements the promotional and training materials already produced and disseminated by WHO in past years](#), will contribute to the wider and more effective implementation of the Kangaroo Mother Care method in all countries



that already apply it or are interested in implementing it for the first time.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the KMC method, [in 2004 WHO has diffused the review article Kangaroo Mother Care: 25 years after](#) produced in collaboration with experts and institutes from Colombia, Switzerland, Italy, Canada, USA, Philippines, South Africa and Ethiopia involved in kangaroo mother care practices. In addition to analyzing the benefits of adopting the method, the article concludes by highlighting that “In developing countries with limited health resources, overcrowding in neonatal units is associated with high morbidity and mortality among low-birthweight infants. Although KMC originated mainly in response to these circumstances, the benefits attributable to it far exceed its effects on overcrowding in busy, understaffed, and under equipped neonatal units. One of the most immediate effects of KMC is to prevent prolonged separation of the mother and her low-birth-weight infant, which contributes to morbidity, insufficient milk volume, poor growth, and poor mother-infant bonding.”...“Living the KMC experience is a powerful and transformative event which helps mothers and families to cope with the emotional challenges associated with caring for a high-risk neonate. The healthcare professionals involved are also touched and motivated by the emotional dimensions of KMC, thereby promoting a more sensitive, humane approach to neonatal care at all levels”.

These valuable aspects of the method are demonstrated by its adoption in many industrialized countries precisely because of its ability to humanize the treatment of low-birth-weight newborn babies with the collaboration of their families.

The Kangaroo Mother Care method (KMC) was developed by Colombian pediatricians Edgar Rey Sanabria and Héctor Martínez-Gómez in 1979 at the Instituto Materno Infantil in Bogotá, Colombia. It was created as a low-cost, effective alternative to incubators for premature or low-birth-weight infants, aimed at reducing infections and mortality. Since 1979, the innovation has been adopted in most Latin American countries, in several European countries, in some states in the U.S.A., in Asia, and in Africa. During the 44th Plenary Assembly of the World Health Organization, Héctor Martínez and Edgar Rey were awarded the 1991 Sasakawa Health Prize.

Today, the Kangaroo method is practiced by healthcare professionals, parents, and volunteers all around the world to benefit babies, families, and society at large. The World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization PAHO and UNICEF have actively promoted and assured their invaluable support in the adoption of the Kangaroo method in the strategies of national health services in many countries around the world

To know more

[Kangaroo mother care. A clinical practice guide. pdf](#)

[Kangaroo mother care a Clinical practice guide presentation in WHO website](#)

[Kangaroo Mother Care Practice Guide in WHO website](#)

[Review article Kangaroo Mother Care: 25 years after in WHO website](#)

[Kangaroo Mother Care implementation strategy WHO 2023](#)

[Kangaroo Mother Care promoted by PAHO](#)

[Kangaroo Mother Care promoted by PAHO](#)

[Kangaroo Mother care in Wikipedia.org](#)



[Article in thelancet.com 2023](https://www.thelancet.com)

[Metodo Madre Canguro - Agencia Presidencial de Cooperación Internacional Colombia- PNUD](#)

[FundacionCanguro Colombia](#)

[UNICEF Panamá](#)

[UNICEF Cameroon](#)

[UNICEF Australia](#)

[Kangaroo Mother Care Humanization of Neonatology in solve.mit.edu](https://solve.mit.edu)

[Kangaroo mother care IDEASS Brochure by Hector Martinez](#)

