

Massage for Infants and Children

Touch is essential for life, proper development, and good health. Infant massage provides a structured way for babies to receive the tactile stimulation and touch bonding they need to thrive.

Research on the benefits of massage demonstrated that massage stimulates growth, aids digestion, positively affects sympathetic and adrenocortical function, aids sleep, and decreases fussing, crying, and behaviors related to stress such as hiccupping.

Infant massage gives parents a means to be an active part in the child's development. Parents also "tune in" to their children and learn how to read their behavioral cues and understand the moment-by-moment needs.

Therapists and parents must learn to read the baby's behavioral cues to avoid overstimulation.

If the baby has bright eyes and is making eye contact, smiling, making happy vocalizations, and reaching toward the parent, these signal receptiveness to massage. If the baby is breaking eye contact and looking away from the parent, arching the back, kicking or jerking the arms and legs, and flaring the fingers and toes, he or she may not be receptive to massage. Crying and pulling away can be strong cues to decrease the stimulation.

Working with preterm infants, babies with injuries or medical conditions, or special needs children requires advanced training and is not discussed here.

- **Baby determines the massage**
- **Crawlers and toddlers:** Crawlers and toddlers are mobile. As the infant grows into these stages, massage has to be mobile and flexible. It works well to turn the massage into play. Sing a song along with the strokes, and use rhymes and facial expressions to keep the child engaged while receiving massage.
- **Duration:** Infants massage sessions last from 5 to 15 minutes

Massage For Children

Why?

- Bonding/parent/sibling/friend
- Health issues
- Growing Pains
- Stress relief
- ADD
- Because parents like massage
- Colic

Revised: 9/13/12

Information from a variety of sources, primarily from:

Massage Mastery, by Anne Williams and A Decision Tree Approach, by Tracy Walton

How much pressure?

- Gentle
- firm warm communication
- slow rhythmic
- comfortable but stimulating

Particular for Infants:

Want babies to know they are in the hands of a strong, capable caregiver.

A baby's muscles comprise a quarter of her total body weight (adults 1/2) and aren't developed enough to have knots of tension.

Gentle but firm effleurage is enough to stimulate circulation and tone the internal functions.

Avoid fluttery, poking, tickling touch, tentative, too soft (can be irritating)

Babies, especially premature infants may seem fragile. Some pressure is needed to be effective. (report of babies weight gain greater when more than just a light stroking is performed)

Avoid fragrance. infants olfactory system is highly refined to as to distinguish the mother chemical 'signature'.

Lubricant:

~ Use a light natural oil. Cold pressed fruit/vegetable . Oil based lotion may be good for very dry skin. Avoid mineral oil. okay to add drop or two of vitamin E.

~ Remember the oil is absorbed through the skin, plus babies put everything in their mouths.

~ Patch test it on the baby if possible.

What is needed?

- Towels
- extra diapers
- change of clothes
- wear something comfortable you won't mind getting oil on
- a warm area
- wash hands
- remove jewelry
- relax your body :)
- Keep baby warm
- Keep your hands warm

Additional Helpful Hints:

- Be comfortable in your body
- Have Baby n floor w/baby on a covered pillow
- Keep baby close
- The 'cradle pose' / "football hold"
- Changing table (**NEVER leave baby alone**)
- Over the knee
- On your lap
- Play some music/tell a story

Visualizations:

Remember to use positive imagery. Picture baby relaxed, opening letting of tension. Visualize her happy and healthy. Imagine her heart beating, her lungs healthy, in intestinal system functioning smoothly. Imagine her blood as it moves though her veins and arteries. Imagine/ see your massage facilitating the blood flow to her arms and legs. Praise her. Smile. Soft, easy eye contact.

Self Care:

Relax yourself: Starting with the top of your head, relax every muscle in your body as much as you can. Feel the waves of relaxation wash over you. from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Gently let your head fall forward to that your chin touches your chest. Slowly rotate your head, first clockwise , the counterclockwise, stretching our neck so that your head sweeps in complete, wide, slow circles. Feel all the muscles in your neck and shoulders stretch and relax.

Now shrug your shoulders, up toward your ears. Hold them there for a few seconds, then release them downward. Repeat a few times. Rotate your shoulders forward, then backward, and shake them out, feeling our entire upper body and arms relax and center.

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Session Intentions:

Request permission to begin. Request permission to touch for each part of the body. Note any sensitivity in an area, (heel pricks in the hospital can remain long after the bruise is gone) Just hold area.

Technique ideas:

Swedish Milking strokes - aid Circulation to the feet

Squeeze, Twist and Rolling strokes - tone and relax legs (remember to not twist knee)

Greet each area with Resting Hands

Thumb over thumb- stroke from heel to the toes

Toe squeeze - squeeze and roll each toe

Under toes -w/ forefinger, gently press the ball of the foot just under toes

thumb press - press in w/ your thumbs all over bottom of the foot

sun/moon on tummy

integration on tummy

remember the arms and hands and back :)

lots more in Infant Massage, A handbook for loving parents, by Vimala McClure

Learn more:

www.messageforchildren.com

<http://www.liddlekidz.com/infant-massage-certification.html>

Infant Massage Strokes/Treatment Protocol (Practice on doll or stuffed animal)

Begin and end sessions and body areas with holding strokes that warm the tissue and relax the body.

Supine

1. Make eye contact with the infant while using gentle effleurage strokes to the abdominal area in clockwise circles
2. Cross crawl
3. Apply circular fingertips to the forehead, top, and sides of the infant's head.
4. Apply gentle arm and leg movements that bring the arms or legs into the centerline of the body and then open the arms or legs outward. The infant's legs can also be gently mobilized so that the knees come towards the belly and then are straightened
5. Apply strokes to the infants palms and feet

Prone (may want to hold baby in "football" hold)

1. With a flat, soft palm apply long effleurage strokes over the back and legs with the infant in the prone position
2. Slow Back Stroke, with fingers in V stroke from head to sacrum, repeating stroke in one second intervals, continue for 1- 5 min.
3. Apply light friction over sacrum for 1 min.
4. Gently squeeze and twist the tissue on the arms and legs. The intent is to move the superficial tissue

Depending on baby's response to the massage and practitioner, may repeat Supine sequence if it appears baby wants longer session.

Typically, a massage therapist will teach a protocol to parents, rather than repeatedly offer sessions to babies. Ideally, parents will perform massage on their infant 1 - 3 times daily.

HOW TO *Massage* a Baby

By Sigrid Nelsson-Ryan, RN, CD (DONA), LCCE, FACCE

Massaging your baby enhances the emotional bond with your child and can calm him down, improve sleep patterns and help digestion. It's also a wonderful way for dads, brothers, sisters, grandparents and other caregivers to share special time with the new addition to the family.

Preparation Tips

Timing: Choose a point when you're relaxed and unhurried and won't be interrupted. Don't plan to massage your baby when he has a full stomach or is hungry.

Position/Setting: Make sure you're comfortable. Sit on the floor or on the bed, or put your baby on your lap. Lay your baby on his back on a terry towel, since first you'll massage the front of your baby, then the back. The room should be warm (75 degrees if possible). Talk to or sing to your baby. You both might also enjoy some soothing music in the background.

Massage Oils: Natural oils are the best — almond oil or a fresh bottle of vegetable oil scented with a drop of fragrance, such as **lemon, vanilla or lavender**. Warm a few drops in your hands. Don't use oil on the head or face. (**Cornstarch** is useful for a quick, few-minutes massage.)

Your Baby's Comfort: It's important to respect your baby's space and integrity. Ask permission, even if your baby can't give verbal consent yet. Stop if you sense overstimulation: A newborn may enjoy only two to five minutes of a simple massage, while a child over two months of age might love a more elaborate one.

Soothing Stomach Distress

☺ Very gently stroke your baby's tummy from top to bottom using the outer edges of first one hand, then the other, in a motion like a waterwheel.

☺ Push his knees onto his tummy, and hold for a count of ten.

☺ Massage the tummy with one hand following the other in clockwise circles. Picture in your mind — and tell your baby — that a gas bubble is leaving his body.

☺ Walk your fingers across your baby's tummy from the right to the left side, then down toward your baby's left hip (to move gas toward the rectum). Repeat sequence as needed. ☺

Sigrid Nelsson-Ryan, RN, CD (DONA), LCCE, FACCE, is on the faculty of Lamaze International and is a consultant to Parent/Family Education at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital in New York City.

THE PREMIE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCH

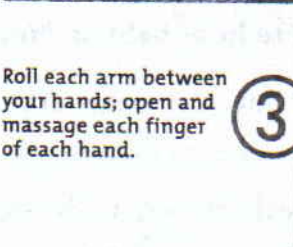
Research has shown that gently massaging premature babies actually helps improve their growth and development. According to one study, preemies who were massaged three times daily for ten days gained almost 50% more weight, were more active and alert and were able to leave the hospital six days earlier than other premature infants.

Rubbing Your Baby the Right Way

Begin by making tiny circles on your baby's head. Then smooth your baby's forehead — with both hands at the center, gently press outward as if stroking the pages of a book. Make small circles around your baby's jaw. Massaging around your baby's mouth may comfort him during teething.



Warming the oil in your hands, stroke your baby's chest (like an open book again).



Roll each arm between your hands; open and massage each finger of each hand.



Massage the tummy, one hand following the other, from your baby's right side to the left.



Roll each leg between your two hands; massage each foot.



Stroke your baby's back — first back and forth across, then in long, sweeping lines from shoulders to feet. Always keep one hand on your baby. End with a kiss to grow on.

Massage for older Children

Older children benefit from massage too, for most of the same reasons. Parents may bring their children in for massage to address: tension from school stress; pain from growing; stress or injury from participation in sports activities, body image issues, and as a treat or reward.

When working on a Minor, under the age of 18 years old, it is important to obtain both their permission; as well as, the parent's permission to receive bodywork. An informed consent form is appropriate for this. Usually, the parent will remain present during the treatment (always offer this opportunity). Some spas utilize a couple's massage room to accommodate minors and encourage the parent to receive a massage at the same time, while being present in the treatment room. This is great for teenagers and offers a positive parent/child bonding activity.

Many therapists choose to avoid any issues with nudity and draping of minors, by only offering modalities such as: Sensory Repatterning, Shiatsu, Thai, and Sports Massage where the client remains fully clothed during the session. These modalities are all appropriate for this age group.