



Baby Massage



“Touch is the newborn’s first language”

Touch is the newborn’s first language - it is his other prime means of communication and plays an essential role in the forming of early parent-child relationships. Massaging your child allows you to express emotional affection and to fulfil your baby’s need for physical contact. The benefits of massage are both emotional and physical, so your baby will achieve all round well-being.

Emotional

With every emotional change there is a muscular reaction. By easing muscular tension, baby massage calms the emotions and helps to relieve some of the trauma and anxiety associated with birth, a new environment and weaning. There is also a variety of other benefits.

- Massaging your baby introduces a unique level of confidence and trust to your relationship.
- Regular massage reduces the circulation of cortisol in the bloodstream, a stress hormone - this reduction is constant and maintained between massage sessions.
- Massage stimulates the release of the body’s natural opiates - endorphins - which subdue pain. Together with the reduction of cortisol, this induces feelings of well being throughout your baby’s body.

Physical

The skin provides the central nervous system with a continual stream of information about the body's immediate environment. As you touch your baby's skin, the sensation is relayed to his or her nervous system, which initiates physical, physiological and emotional responses. Other physical benefits of massage include:

- Every bit as important as vitamins, minerals and proteins, touch is essential to the healthy growth and development of your baby - babies who are deprived of touch do not thrive.
- A regular massage encourages the increase of growth hormones from the pituitary gland.
- As muscles relax, they absorb blood and when they contract, they help to pump blood back to the heart and aid the venous return. The periphery of your baby's body - the top of her head, her hands and her feet - are often cold because her circulatory system is not fully developed. Baby massage aids circulation - warming the hands and feet as you massage.
- As muscles relax, they allow the free movement of the baby's joints. Baby massage encourages muscular relaxation and joint flexibility at the stage when your baby is stretching to establish a wide range of physical movement and mobility.
- Regular massage cleanses your baby's skin and helps to remove dead cells. It opens the pores and encourages the elimination of toxins and the secretion of sebum - the natural oil that aids the skin's elasticity and resilience and resistance to infections.
- Massage stimulates the vagus nerve, one branch of which leads to the gastrointestinal tract, where it facilitates the release of food absorption hormones such as glucose and insulin.
- Massage and movement promote the flow of waste-removing lymphatic fluid and improve the body's resistance to infection.
- A loving touch makes us feel better. The Hippocratic - or ancient Greek first medical definition of good health is "a good bodily feeling".

Attributed to the Active Birth Centre



Key benefits you and your baby will get from baby massage routines

- Closeness and contentment
- Learning how and when your baby likes to be stroked
- Making your baby feel protected and loved
- Strengthening the physical and emotional bond between you and your baby
- Skin-to-Skin contact between parent and baby
- Nurturing your baby's feelings of security
- Aiding digestion
- Strengthening your baby's immune system



For baby massage classes in your area contact your local Family/Health Centre

An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teachlach
Child and Family Agency

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