



Infant Massage *The Calming Power of Touch*

Did you know you can help your baby learn how to communicate even though he can't talk yet? Or that you can help your baby to grow big and strong just by massaging her?

Learning how to give your baby an infant massage can help do all that and more.



You've already discovered that when your baby cries you want to pick her up, hold her and sooth her. Your touch is communicating that everything is okay. And that you are there and you love him.

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But your touch is also doing so much more.

Studies done by the University of Miami's Touch Research Institute found that it was just as important for infants to be touched as was for them to feed and sleep. Touch is vital for the development of attachment and bonding and for early social development of a child.

Other studies conducted at the UCLA Medical Center found that giving preterm and medically frail infants daily massage helped them to gain weight faster than babies who did not receive massage. They found that massage stimulated the release of insulin and glycogen which helps the body to absorb the nutrients to help the body grow.

The renowned anthropologist Ashley Montagu found that x-ray exams of orphaned children who had received little or no touch as infants had delayed skeletal development and the presence of Harris lines in the growth plates of their arms and legs. Fortunately there is scientific evidence indicating that it is never too late to introduce touch and reverse the adverse effects of touch deprivation. Did you realize that our touch could be so powerful?

Learning Infant Massage

The focus of infant massage is not solely on the baby, but on the mutual interaction between infant and parent. Infant massage is not just *done to* a baby; it is *done with* a baby.

Babies are social creatures who learn from their interactions with others. By expanding your child's repertoire of interactive behaviors you can assist her in developing communication and how to positively interact with others.

Infant massage helps parents too. You learn new parenting skills and you get better at reading your baby's cues. It's also a great time for you to relax and be present with your baby. It's been proven that both giving and receiving a massage lowers cortisol (stress hormone) levels in the body. No wonder it feels so good!

Infant massage helps parents engage their infants with tactile and kinesthetic stimulation. During a massage your baby will not only learn how to relax and move their body's in new ways but they are also discovering how to communicate.

Babies communicate through their bodies. When you engage a baby in a massage, you begin to really listen to the infant. You listen to sounds, you watch movements, you listen with your eyes, your ears and your heart. By learning the ways your baby communicates, you are nurturing the most important relationship the child will ever have: the relationship with you, their parent.

Learning infant massage from a certified instructor encourages you to become confident in the quality of your touch. A lot is communicated through touch and as a parent you want your touch to express the love and respect and awe that you feel for your child.



Infant massage is not only about massaging a baby-it's about working with families; building nurturing relationships; deepening their bond; furthering respect, trust, love and security. Infant massage helps to lay the foundation upon which the parent-infant relationship grows.

How Posture and Alignment Change During Pregnancy

Though subtle, the postural changes of pregnancy have profound effects on many areas of your body. As the weight of your baby grows and the uterus expands, the pelvis tips forward to counterbalance the load.



The pubic bone and tailbone rotate backward, increasing the arch in your lower back. In fitness terminology, this is called an anterior pelvic tilt.

Because the spine is a dynamic structure, alignment changes in the pelvis have a ripple effect on the rest of the spine. The thorax, or upper back, increases its curve, which rounds the shoulders forward and collapses the chest. In response to the increased thoracic curve, the head slides forward. Too much of a curve in the upper vertebrae of the back is referred to as a kyphotic posture.

During pregnancy, women experience a compound alignment problem: an exaggerated lumbar and thoracic curvature, which augments all of the natural "S" curves of the spine.

As pregnancy advances, the ribcage also expands dramati-

cally, providing needed additional space for the lungs as the uterus expands and fills the abdominal cavity.

Muscular Imbalances of Pregnancy

To compensate for these postural deviations, specific muscle groups must work harder to support the body in the upright position. Over time, these muscles shorten and become hypertonic, or chronically contracted. Hypertonic muscles often develop trigger points, those hyperirritable "knots" that refer pain. Opposing muscle groups need to work less to support the body, and weaken and atrophy, or become hypotonic.

These postural and muscular changes tend to be self-reinforcing. As the belly expands, the postural deviations worsen, which in turn, further augment muscular imbalances.

However, you can prevent or lessen most of these conditions with a prenatal massage and exercise program that focuses on counterbalancing these effects by:

1. Lengthening muscle groups that have become short and tight.
2. Strengthening and toning muscle groups that tend to weaken.
3. Learning core strength and stability exercises that incorporate the neutral spine position.

Pregnancy's Impact on Connective Tissues & Ligaments

Pregnancy hormones stimulate lengthening and laxity in the ligaments and other con-

nective tissues, which allows the pelvic outlet to expand during labor and delivery. Ligament laxity leaves joints more vulnerable to injury and the postural effects of:

- Joint laxity and dynamic instability throughout the body, particularly the ankle, knee, pelvis, spine, shoulders and wrist.
- Increased risk of nerve compression, such as sciatica, thoracic outlet syndrome and carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Increased risk of acute injuries, particularly at the ankle, knee, pelvis and spine.
- Abdominal separation or Diastasis Recti.
- Low back pain caused by laxity and or continual strain of uterine ligaments.

What's Prenatal Massage?

Pre-natal massage is very similar to massage for a non-pregnant individual. The session focuses on reducing any pain or discomfort you may be experiencing as well as allowing you the space and time to relax.

However there are a few modifications that will be made to ensure your comfort and meet your special needs

during pregnancy.

Most obviously will be the body positioning while receiving a massage. Sideling and semi-reclining positions are most often the preferred posi-

tioning for both the mom-to-be and the therapist. In some instances lying face down in a BodyCushion® will be appropriate. These specially designed bolsters allow a pregnant woman to lie face down while receiving a massage.

The BodyCushion® is fully adjustable to accommodate the very different sizes of the individual. Unlike massage tables with a hole cut out for the belly, the BodyCushion® does not put any additional strain on the uterine ligaments, which are often the source of referred low back pain. Additionally the BodyCushion® design allows your pelvis and chest to be fully supported but does not increase intrauterine pressure from compression of the abdomen.

The massage you receive on your legs while be a lighter pressure than what you may be accustomed to. This is for two reasons. First, lymphatic drainage massage will be a welcomed relief for any swelling in your ankles and feet as well helping to reduce that feeling of heaviness. And second, dur-



ing pregnancy your body increases its ability to clot blood, which is necessary during labor. However this warrants caution when massaging the legs during pregnancy.

Pregnancy Posture cont.

You may have heard about certain acupressure and reflex points on your body that can stimulate labor. Put your mind at ease, a massage therapist trained in pregnancy massage knows how to locate these points and will avoid them during your massage.

During pregnancy there can be certain conditions when massage should be avoided. It is best to speak with your health care practitioner to find out if massage therapy can be part of your pre-natal wellness.

Regular massage during pregnancy can help reduce the discomforts that are often experienced, like low back and hip pain, swelling in the ankles, feet and hands, as well as neck and upper back tension. Regular massage can help you sleep better too.

Pre-natal massage is a great way to honor and support the amazing changes that you are experiencing during the child-bearing year.

Jen Zalta is a nationally certified massage therapist specializing in orthopedic massage. She is the Massage Therapy Foundation's '07 Gold Award recipient for her research on massage for patellofemoral pain syndrome. She is an online contributor for Massage Magazine and has been published in the International Journal of Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork. Jen has been working with pregnant clients for over 7 years and is a Mother Massage® certified pre & post natal massage therapist. In addition to her massage practice & writing, Jen teaches Infant Massage Classes. She is currently developing a class for birth partners to learn massage techniques for labor support.

The Benefits of Baby Massage

BENEFITS FOR BABY:

- Promotes bonding and attachment
- Increases self-esteem
- Increases sense of love, acceptance, respect and trust
- Enhances communication
- Improves body awareness
- Improves relaxation and release of stress
- Stimulates the circulatory and nervous systems
- Stimulates digestive and endocrine systems, which can lead to weight gain
- Reduces discomfort from teething, congestion, gas, colic and emotional stress
- Improves muscle tone coordination
- Increases elimination
- Improves sleep patterns
- Increases hormonal function

BENEFITS FOR PARENT GIVING MASSAGE:

- Improves ability to read infant cues
- Improves synchrony between caregiver and infant
- Promotes bonding
- Increases confidence in parenting
- Increases communication-verbal and non-verbal
- Improves relaxation & reduces stress
- Provides time to share, and quality time
- Promotes parenting skills
- Improves sense of well-being
- Reduces blood pressure

AND IT'S FUN!

Abdominal Exercises for the Childbearing Year

Transverse Abdominis Isolations on a Wall

1. Stand about a foot from the wall, with your feet hip distance apart, toes facing forward, knees slightly bent.
 2. Using your hands for support, lean your torso back onto the wall.
 3. Align your spine in a neutral position. Your pelvis, ribcage, shoulders and head should be in contact with the wall.
 4. Inhale deeply through your nose, expanding in ribcage all directions.
 5. Exhale slowly, hissing through your teeth. At the same time pull your belly inward toward your spine as much as you can. Remember your neutral spine!
 6. Hold your belly in as you inhale deeply through your nose expanding your ribcage in all directions.
 7. Repeat the exhale/hissing while drawing your belly in, 2 or more times. Remember to keep your belly tight during the inhale.
 8. After the third time, exhale deeply, relaxing your belly naturally.
 9. Perform four sets of 3 repetitions.
- This exercise should not be a challenge for your thighs. If your legs get tired, move your heels a little closer to the wall.



Pelvic Tilt Exercise on a Wall

1. Perform the first six steps (1-5) of the Transverse Abdominis Isolations on a wall.
2. On your second exhalation, flex your lower spine, pulling your pubic bone up toward your sternum as much as you can. Your lower back will lengthen and press into the wall. Keep your upper back and head against the wall.
3. Take care that your bum stays soft. Use of your buttocks during the pelvic tilts reduces the effectiveness of the exercise.
4. Inhale deeply, expanding your ribcage while maintaining the contraction of your abdominal muscles.
5. Exhale; relax your effort allowing your belly to expand naturally and your pelvis to roll back into neutral.
6. Perform 8 repetitions



A MASSAGE EXPERIENCE THAT KEEPS YOU PERFORMING AT YOUR PEAK

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THE EVERYTHING BABY ISSUE!

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Got a Baby Shower on Your Calendar?

Baby Massage Classes

THE CALMING POWER OF TOUCH

Learn how to safely massage your infant with confidence & understanding. This 3 week course is offered for Moms, Dads & Caregivers who want to learn new ways to bond with their baby. Each one hour class introduces a new massage routine for baby with handouts to help you remember the strokes. Class discussions include using massage oils & lotions, contra-indications to massage, reading your baby's cues, asking baby's permission, coping with common ailments & adapting massage for the growing child. You will also learn specific massage routines to ease digestive issues including colic; soothing teething discomfort & relieving congestion. Classes are open to infants 1m. to pre-crawling.
\$90/ infant: includes all 3 classes, organic massage oil & handouts

Next class starts in January 2009.

Check the website for more details & registration.

Prenatal Massage Packages

Trimesters Plus One!

*3 one hour prenatal massages &
a one hour post natal massage.*
\$275

The Childbearing Year

*9 one hour prenatal massages nurture
you through pregnancy & 3 one hour
post natal massages to keep you playing
Super Mom*
\$720

A Perfect Pick Me Up

*An hour prenatal or postnatal massage
just when you need it.*
\$75

Add the Baby Massage Class

to the purchase of a Pregnancy Massage Package for only \$75



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