

The Joys of Infant Massage

Your baby will love you for it!

Infant massage is a therapy that is gaining momentum across the western world as parents seek more effective ways to create happier, healthier babies. For centuries, in many traditional cultures, women have been massaging their babies as a way of soothing, bonding, and enhancing the overall health and wellbeing of their children.

Who should be aware of Infant Massage? Well, the obvious ones are mothers and pregnant women, but also included are fathers, grandparents and caregivers. Equally important are the people who care for children outside the home: nurses on Intensive Care Units working with premature babies for instance, and those who work with the disabled.

Most infants sleep for longer periods following massage and experience longer periods of deep sleep. Understandably, this is a favourite benefit for many parents and is often the reason they seek a baby massage course. However there are many more wonderful benefits baby massage has to offer.

Why Infant Massage?

Infant Massage is a joyful and relaxing experience for both parent and baby. You may not be aware that babies often get stressed being in new environments and babies also pick up on your stress or anxiety. Taking time out together for a massage teaches your baby how to relax and you too.

Massage is a tool for maintaining health and wellbeing on many different levels.

Findings from research undertaken over the years have proven that there are clear benefits from Infant Massage.



These benefits include:

- Promotion of deep and restful sleep
- Relief of trapped wind “colic”
- Relief from constipation and digestive problems
- Reduced crying
- Assisting to relieve sinus and chest congestion
- Eased teething pain
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Reduced symptoms of eczema
- Increased weight gain in low birth-weight infants
- Strengthened immune system
- Enhanced motor development
- Strengthened loving bond between baby & parent
- Help in relieving symptoms of post-natal depression

Bonding with your baby

Sadly for many women, bonding with their baby doesn't always happen easily. The bonding experience can be enhanced by massage. Baby massage can play a vital role of connecting with your baby, particularly if you've suffered post-natal depression, a premature baby or medical problems.

Studies have now shown that touch, even something as simple as a hug, releases the hormone oxytocin. Its effects are to lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and pain and promote relaxation. What is more, the benefits are reciprocal - when you massage your baby your own stress hormone levels improve and your blood pressure lowers.

So what about dads? They need to bond with their babies too, and what better way to do this than through the loving touch of massage. Dads who bond with their bubs in the first few weeks and months following birth can have a deeper and closer bond with their children throughout their lives.

When to start massage?

You can start to massage your baby from birth. Start off with small sessions with a few simple strokes and work up to longer times. Always watch your baby's body language and only massage for as long as your baby is enjoying it.

Make sure you are in the mood for massage!

A dimly lit room or one filled with gentle sunlight is best. Make sure the room temperature is comfortable, especially in colder months, and avoid areas that are draughty. You may like to play some soothing, relaxing music. Alternatively you can sing or talk quietly to your baby. As your baby grows you can incorporate games and rhymes into the massage.

Simple tips on how to massage your baby:

- Select a time that your baby is happy to receive a massage
- Use a good quality cold-pressed oil like apricot kernel oil or jojoba oil
- Baby's skin is very soft, so keep your fingernails short and keep aside the jewellery pieces you wear on hands when you are massaging your baby
- Always begin by massaging the legs first; this is because the legs are touched constantly while changing nappies and babies will be familiar with this type of touch
- Use long firm strokes. Light, feathery massage can tickle or irritate your baby
- When massaging your baby's tummy (while they are lying down in front of you) always massage in a clockwise direction and only massage the lower half of their tummy
- Make sure that your hands are nice and warm
- Finish massage with a loving, warm cuddle

The best way to learn the right massage techniques is to undertake a baby massage course.

A certified Infant Massage Instructor may offer baby massage courses or workshops in your local area. Massage therapy programs for babies with special needs are sometimes available through hospitals or infant stimulation programs.

For further information on Infant Massage classes contact Melinda Minns on 0404 867 944 or visit www.buddhabubs.com.au