



INTRODUCTION TO BABY MASSAGE

Getting the timing right

The ideal time is when your baby is quietly alert and content to receive a massage. This may be after a nap and a feed. Wait 10 minutes after a full feed. Massage is generally a stimulating exercise for young babies under the age of 5 months, please be aware of baby's tired signs so baby does not get overstimulated with massage. Do not massage when your baby is tired or hungry. The current recommendation for infants under 5 months is that massage and bath time are separated by a nap. This is due to both together being too stimulating for the baby. After 5 months of age it is OK to do bath followed by massage. We do not recommend a massage BEFORE a bath due to the risk of the baby slipping out of the parent's hands (as they maybe slippery with massage oil)

What oils and creams to use

IMIS (Infant Massage Information Service) recommends cold-pressed, organic edible oils as these are easily absorbed by the skin and provide the additional benefits of vitamins and minerals. There is a high chance baby will ingest the oil you use as they put hands and feet to mouth. Thus, apricot kernel oil, sweet almond oil and sesame oil are often recommended. Avoid petroleum based oils as its texture is too thick to be absorbed by the skin. Olive oil is also not recommended. Research has established a link to olive oil use drying the skin and contributing to atopic skin conditions like eczema. Coconut oil is ok to use but has a strong fragrance which can inhibit bonding through the sense of smell. Avoid essential oils as they are very potent for delicate baby skin and their fragrance can inhibit bonding. If you are concerned about allergies, use creams that are non-organic and therefore less allergy-inducing. These are non-edible, so wipe any excess off baby's hands and feet after. A patch test can be performed on baby's forearm near elbow to watch for any reactions if there are concerns with allergy.

The Permission Sequence

The permission sequence is a cue used to gauge your baby's body language if it is an appropriate time to massage. Infants can learn and respond to cues. It can take 6-8 weeks for an infant to learn the cue and respond to show you whether they are ready to receive a massage.

- *Yes cues:* relaxed with open arms, eye contact, eyes wide and bright, smiling, positive vocalization, playfully bouncing arms, pulling your hands towards their body
- *No cues:* No eye contact, grimacing, crying, fussing, pushing away/kicking your hands, waving in agitation, arching back, rubbing eyes, pulling ears, shaking head.
- *Tired signs:* staring/glazing/avoiding eye contact/yawning

The Massage Sequence:

For young babies under 5 months it is ok if you do not get through every part of the body all in one go.

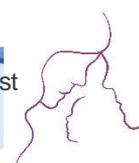
The Lower Limb area (legs).

It is recommended to begin at the legs as this is the least intrusive way to begin a massage. Use gentle but moderately firm, confident strokes. Avoid light, feather-like touch as it is not as beneficial for baby, and can be irritating to them

- **C-shaped strokes:** Supporting the ankle, make a C-shape with thumb and index finger and perform long firm strokes from the hip to the ankle, alternating hands.
- **Rolling:** Roll the leg between your palms moving from the hip towards the ankle
- **Circles:** Make small circular strokes with the pads of your index and middle finger, massaging the underlying muscle of the thighs and legs: avoid the shinbone and knee caps
- **Swedish massage-** Make a C-shape with your hand and perform long firm strokes from ankle to hip.

The Abdomen

- Locate the line of the diaphragm.
- Warming the abdomen: Spread the oil/lotion over the abdomen, avoid the chest





- Scooping: Start once the umbilical stump is healed. With the palms flat and horizontal, apply firm gentle pressure downward from the diaphragm to the pubic bone, alternating hands.
- Lower-case 'n' stroke: With pads of index and middle finger, start from the middle of the left hip and using firm pressure move up towards the diaphragm, horizontal across the abdomen (below the line of the diaphragm) and down in a right angle to the right hip.

The Chest

The chest permission sequence is recommended before massaging the chest as this is an emotional area of the body which houses vital organs. Look for cues that your baby is not comfortable with massage on this part of their body: arm movements going out from the, covering your hands with theirs, or trying to stop you from massaging the chest. Stop and move to another area of the body. Butterfly stroke: Use pads of index and middle finger to massage from the top part of the sternum out towards the shoulders, down the sides of the chest, and in and up in an inverted V to the lower part of the sternum.

The Face

- Eyebrow stroke with the pads of the thumb from the inside of the eyebrow to the temple
- Sinus stroke with the pads of the little finger down the sides of the nose, under the cheek bone to the sides of the face
- Lip lines: thumb and index fingers from the centre of the lips out to the corners
- Lip circles: circle around the lips moving the skin

The Back

- 5 positions: on their tummy/on their side/across your lap/supported sitting/cuddling
- Gentle strokes with palms flat and horizontal moving down from neck to buttocks
- Circles: With the pads of index and middle finger move the skin over the para-spinal muscles working downwards on either side of the spine, avoid the bony processes of the spine
- Hold and rock: with one palm on the neck/upper back and other near the buttocks, gently rock the palms in opposite direction repeating something like "all done now" to convey to the baby that the time for massage has come to an end.

Massage Sequence for colic/wind/constipation

1.

Reassurance 2. Warming the abdomen 3. Scooping 4. Touch relaxation 5. Lowercase 'n' stroke 6. Touch relaxation.

- Reassurance is given prior to beginning this sequence rather than asking permission as in this case the massage is given to relieve abdominal pain and discomfort. Hold their hands together in the centre of their chest and verbally reassure them in a calming voice.
- Touch relaxation: This technique teaches the baby to sense tension in their body and to consciously relax. Gently and firmly hold the legs and bend knees to abdomen, hold for 6 seconds then gently straighten and lower the legs down, 'bouncing' their legs back to relaxed position whilst maintaining eye contact and repeating the words "relax, relax, relax..." in a calm/soothing voice. Give the praise if they have been able to relax. Choosing to relax is a learned skill and requires repetition. repeat 6 times.
- Counting out aloud keeps you on track and may help baby relax.
- For colic/wind/constipation perform the sequence 3 times and repeat 2 x day for 4 weeks.

