



Welcome Baby



utah county
health department
"creating healthy communities"



United Way
of Utah County

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A Newsletter for "Welcome Baby" and "Parents as Teachers" Families

Infant Massage: Special time with Baby



Who doesn't love a good massage? Infants too enjoy and benefit from special touch. Not only can massaging your baby help him or her relax, but there are many surprising benefits to infant massage. Here are some **benefits** babies experience during massage. Infant massage:

- Increases oxygen and nutrient flow to cells
- Improves muscle tone and reduces muscle stiffness
- Improves sensory awareness
- Relieves discomfort from teething, congestion, gas, colic, and emotional distress
- Encourages bonding with a loving caregiver
- Increases a baby's sense of well-being
- Improves blood circulation
- Promotes better sleep
- Boosts immune system
- Improved skin condition
- Helps waste elimination
- Helps digestion
- Facilitates body awareness
- Helps baby feel loved and secure
- Promotes brain growth
- Stimulates growth-promoting hormones

- Helps relieve tension built up from all the stimulation baby experiences

Parents also benefit from infant massage. Some of these benefits include:

- Feeling more confident and comfortable in their ability to care for their baby
- Learning techniques to comfort, calm, and soothe their infant
- Learning to understand and respond to baby's cues
- Feeling closer to their infant
- Relaxation

To Get Started...

You will need:

- Oil (an unscented, cold-pressed fruit or vegetable oil such as sweet almond, apricot, or a blend is recommended)
- Towel or blanket to lay baby on
- Pillow to help baby feel more secure. The support of the pillow helps reduce baby's reflexive tendency to startle.
- Music—Playing quiet music is a great way to create a clam atmosphere

Once you have your supplies, follow these steps to get started:

1. Find a time when both you and your baby are relaxed. Find a quiet, warm area of your home and set out your supplies.
2. Undress your baby, leaving his or her diaper on. If your baby seems cold you can use a blanket or towel to add warmth. Make sure the room you are massaging your baby in is warm so that he/she does not get too cold.
3. Lay your baby on his or her back, placed on a



pillow so that they feel more secure. You can also place baby in your lap.

4. Place a small amount of oil on your hands and rub them together to generate heat and to show your baby that you are about to begin a massage.
5. Now ask your baby for permission to give him or her a massage. This is one of the most important parts of infant massage. Show your palms to your baby and ask, "May I massage you now?" If your baby shows signs of willingness, such as making eye contact, looking at your face, smooth movement of arms and legs or a smile, proceed with the massage. If your baby shows signs of unwillingness such as frowning, arched back, crying or turning away their head, wait for a better time.

Massage time!

Begin with the legs, the easiest to work with and the easiest part for baby to accept. Hold the foot with one hand and "milk" the leg from ankle to thigh with the other. Then, hold the thigh with both hands, as if holding a baseball bat, and using a gentle twisting and squeezing motion, move your hands from thigh to foot. Finally, roll the leg between your hands from knee to ankle. As you move down the leg to the foot, do a series of thumb presses with your hand encircling the ankle and foot. For the finishing touch, lightly stroke the legs from thigh to feet before you move onto the trunk.



To massage the abdomen, slide your whole palm and fingers in a hand-over-hand circular motion, working from the rib cage downward. Next, slide

both hands around the abdomen in clockwise circular movements. To relax a tense, bloated abdomen try the "I Love U" stroke. Finally, using fingertip pressure, try "walking" over the abdomen.

For the chest, slide both hands along the rib cage from center to sides and back again, like flattening the pages in a book.

The arms and hands are done in the same fashion as the legs and the feet, beginning, however, with a "pit stop" (massaging the lymph nodes in the armpit).

The face has special strokes all its own – whole-handed smoothing; lightly pressing, pushing, and circling with the thumbs; and finally combing from forehead over cheeks with light fingertip strokes.

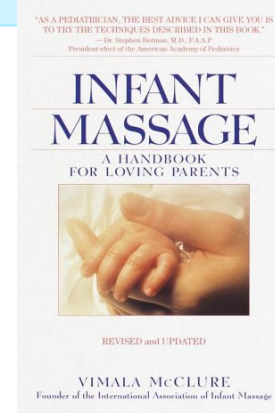
Last, do the back. With the pads of your fingers, lightly rub small circles all over the back. Then gently come with the fingertips from back over buttocks and legs to ankles.

Taken in part from:

Benefits of infant massage. (2011). Retrieved February 17, 2011 from <http://www.infantmassageusa.org/learn-to-massage-your-baby/benefits-of-infant-massage/>

Sears (2011). *The right touch: the art of infant massage.* Retrieved February 17, 2011 from <http://www.askdrsears.com/html/10/T110209.asp>

For more information about Infant Massage, feel free to read *Infant Massage: A Handbook for Loving Parents* by Vimala Schneider



Community Events

- **Ready to Learn**—March 16th at the Utah County Health Department (UCHD), Rm. 2500 from 12-1 p.m. Receive a complimentary book.
- **Car Seat Safety Class**—March 3rd at 4:30 in the Health and Justice Building in Provo. Please come 10 minutes before the beginning of class.

Learn Infant Massage

Ask your Welcome baby home-visitor to teach you infant massage. She'll bring oil, handouts with easy-to-follow pictures, a short instructional video, and even show you how to do it with your baby. You will also find more information on infant massage in one of our many playgroup lessons online at <http://www.unitedwayuc.org/welcomebaby/playgroups.php>