

Infant Massage Benefits for Babies

It is never too late to begin massage. Whether your baby is a newborn or several years old, massage can bring immediate and lasting results. Expectant parents who take infant massage instruction in advance are ready to begin this wonderful loving touch right from the start.

Benefits for infants, babies and children include the following:

- Provides a special time of communication that fosters love, compassion, and respect
- Improves general well-being
- Provides an intimate time for children to confide in parents
- Improves overall functioning of the gastrointestinal tract
- Promotes relaxation and helps babies self-regulate calm, which reduces crying
- Helps to normalize muscle tone
- Improves circulation
- Enhances immune system function
- Improves midline orientation
- Helps to improve sensory and body awareness
- Enhances neurological development
- Helps baby/child to sleep deeper and more soundly
- Helps to increase oxygen and nutrient flow to cells. Improves respiration
- Helps to improve pain management; can relieve discomfort from teething,
- Helps with congestion, gas, and colic
- Enhances release of hormones in the body. The growth hormone can be stimulated which helps weight gain.
- Reduces levels of cortisol, the stress hormone
- Provides all of the essential indicators of intimate parent-infant bonding and attachment: eye-to-eye, touch, voice, smell, movement, and thermal regulation.
- Stimulates all of the physiological systems. Massage sparks the neurons in their brains to grow and branch out to encompass other neurons.

Infant Massage in the NICU:

Premature Massage in the NICU: Expanding research in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) has documented the short-term advantages of gentle touch and massage for healthy term infants and for some growing and medically stable pre-term newborns. Parents of preemies gain confidence and greater security in their handling skills through healing loving touch.

Significant Evidence-Based Research Findings of Infant Massage:

- Supports parent-infant interaction
- Facilitates weight gain in preterm infants¹
- Lowers levels of cortisol, the stress hormone
- Increases muscle tone
- Improves sleep and awake patterns
- Shortens lengths of stay in hospitals
- Improves cognitive and motor development at eight months of age
- Infant massage is an inexpensive tool
- Can be used as part of the developmental care plan of preterm infants
- Recent research shows there are significant benefits to infant massage that out weigh over-stimulation
- Properly applied techniques produce increased benefits, such as improved developmental scores and earlier discharge²

Infant Massage Benefits for Parents:

It is never too late to begin massage. Evidence-based practice supports the use of infant massage. Whether your baby is a newborn or several years old, massage can bring immediate and lasting results. Expectant parents often take infant massage instruction in advance so they are ready to begin this wonderful loving touch right from the start.

Benefits for parents and primary caregivers include:

- Provides all of the essential indicators of intimate parent-infant bonding and attachment: eye-to-eye, touch, voice, smell, movement, and thermal regulation.
- Encourages pre-verbal communication between caregiver and infant
- Helps parents feel more confident and competent in caring for their children
- Helps parents to ease their stress if they are a working parent and must be separated from their children for extended periods during the day
- Provides parents with one-on-one quiet time or interactive play with their children
- Creates a regular time of intimacy between parent and child.
- Increases parents' self-esteem by reinforcing and enhancing their skills as parents, and validates their role
- Gives parents the tools for understanding their child's unique rhythms and patterns
- Teaches parents how to read their infants' cues and recognize their states of awareness
- Gives parents a special way to interact with their children who may be hospitalized. Helps parents feel a greater part of the healing process
- Daily massage helps parents to unwind and relax
- Provides a positive way for fathers to interact with their infants/children