

# Baby Massage and Movement

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People have been massaging babies for centuries, it's only now that the western world has realised that something as simple as massaging your baby from birth can give you both a unique range of benefits.

Research tells us that 'touch' is a primal need, and the first important mode of communication between a mother and her new baby. This is why of skin-to-skin at birth is important and why, when you're baby cries you are compelled to pick him up and comfort him.

Baby massage encourages a good relationship between parent and baby. It provides quality time to be together, not changing nappies, making dinner, shopping or sterilizing bottles. By giving baby massage parents find it relaxing, peaceful and calming.

Massaging baby is also ideal for Dads to become involved and in touch with their babies. Fathers can be wonderful at baby massage and it can give them positive interaction and a special bond with their baby at a time when he can easily feel left out.

Additional to the obvious benefits of bonding, the one-on-one interaction of baby massage is a tool for maintaining your child's health and well-being. It:

- encourages motor development, structural fitness, muscular coordination and flexibility
- deepens breathing rhythm, inducing relaxation which supports better quality sleep
- improves circulation which strengthens immunity.
- stimulates digestion which relieves pain from wind, constipation and colic.

## **Colic, Constipation and Reflux**

Those three little words can strike fear into the hearts of new parents. Endless hours of crying, sleepless nights and emotional exhaustion for all of you.

For those coping with a very windy or colicky baby, help is at hand. Massage techniques can ease pain and discomfort and help baby to relax. Massage can help to disperse wind, ease muscle spasm, tone the digestive system and help it to work efficiently. It is not a miracle cure and can take a few days to ease, but in my experience it can be more effective than simply waiting for them to grow out of it or using every pharmaceutical remedy available.

You can learn techniques through a book or video, but the most effective way is to attend a class run by a local teacher of baby massage. I am a qualified Nursery Nurse and Developmental Baby Massage Instructor among other pre and postnatal therapies.

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## **Expert tips**

### **A little massage for a little person**

- Pull your baby's leg through your palms and fingers, hand over hand, from the thigh to foot. Give your baby's leg a gentle shake. Do the same with the other leg.
- Lay the weight of your open, relaxed hand on your baby's tummy and, without pressing downwards, massage in a clockwise direction - your left to your right. This is in the

same direction as the baby's digestive system. (*Only introduce tummy massage once the cord has healed and the baby has straightened from the foetal position.*)

- Lay your baby on his tummy and stroke down the back, hand over hand.
- Now lay your hands on the back of your baby's shoulders and stroke downwards over the back, down the back of the legs to the feet.