

## Fact Sheet

### Baby massage

[womensnewbornhealth.com.au](http://womensnewbornhealth.com.au)

For centuries, massage has been used to promote wellness: a healthy circulatory system, improving immune function and releasing emotional stress. More recently studies are showing that infants may enjoy these same healthful benefits.

Infant massage is an old parenting practice which has been used in many cultures such as Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America. Mothers in India have been massaging their newborns since 3000 BC, much longer than their Western counterparts. It's only in the last 30 years that infant massage has taken hold in the West.

#### Benefits of baby Massage.

Massaging your baby is a lovely way to soothe, calm and enjoy time with them. It can be another way to help you bond with them. Babies communicate with the world around them through touch. The power of touch to soothe and heal is instinctive.

Nurturing touch between a parent/caregiver and a baby enriches physiological, social and emotional connections for the baby, as well as for the parent.



Make sure your room is warm and free of draughts. Many people find that just after a bath is the best time as the baby is already undressed.

You should use a pure edible oil (such as, apricot or light olive oil) and avoid any oil containing nuts in case of allergies. Place the oil onto your hands, not directly onto your baby.

Baby massage is soothing and can comfortably last 10 to 30 minutes. Ensure your hands are clean and warm. Remove any sharp or spiky jewellery. You might also like to wear some old clothes in case you get oil on you and have a towel handy. You can have some soft music playing in the background.

Massaging your baby is a way of connecting with your baby and also help them to relax. It should be something you both enjoy so make sure you have some time allocated where you will not be interrupted.

It's also not a good idea to massage your baby when they are upset. Be guided by what your baby likes and how you feel as well.



#### Getting started

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#### How to massage

- to get started, smooth a few drops of oil into your warm hands and begin massaging the soles of your baby's feet. Use firm, gentle, slow strokes from the heel towards the toes. Always keep one hand on your baby while massaging.
- continue with long smooth strokes up your baby's legs. Massage from the ankle up to the thigh and over the hip. You can try massaging both legs or one leg at a time. Avoid massaging the genital area. Support your baby's leg under the knee and gently move it up towards the tummy this may also help them expel gas.

#### Upper body

- start the upper body massage with your hands on your baby's shoulders. Make gentle strokes in towards the chest
- massage baby's arms by stroking from the shoulders down towards the wrists. Ensuring not to get oil on your baby's hands. If this happens, wipe their fingers clean before they suck on them
- if your baby's tummy feels soft (not hard or full), massage their belly using circular, clockwise strokes. Babies' tummies are very sensitive, so they get unsettled when massaging their tummies if hard or full. If this is the case move on to the next step. Avoid massaging the naval area if the cord hasn't completely healed.

**Always make sure there is one hand in contact with your baby's body.**



#### Face and back

- use your fingertips to massage your baby's face. Stroke from the middle of their forehead, down the outside of their face and in towards the cheeks, avoiding the eyes. With your fingertips, massage the scalp in small circles as if you're shampooing their hair.
- if your baby is still relaxed once you've finished massaging the front of their body, you can turn them onto their tummy and use long, smooth strokes to massage from head to toe.



Please see link below on baby massaging via the Raising Children website

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/baby\\_massage\\_video.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/baby_massage_video.html)

**Remember that you should stop the massage if your baby is not enjoying it or is showing signs of distress or discomfort.**

**It is also best to avoid a massage if you are feeling uptight or tense.**

**We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.**

**Send your feedback to:**

WSLHD-Get\_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au