



INTRODUCTION

Tips on getting started in baby massage

Why should I massage my baby?

Baby massage has been practised in many cultures for thousands of years, and research shows many benefits. This guide has been created to give you examples of what you will learn in a massage class. Through massage, you can gain increased awareness of how your baby communicates and ideas on ways to support your baby in their first few months. You and your baby will discover what is best for you both. It is important to be mindful that massage is something you do **with**, rather than **to** your baby.

It is recommended that you learn more from someone with a qualification in infant massage to gain the full benefit. Going to a baby massage group is an ideal way to learn to massage your baby safely.

The International Association of Infant Massage (IAIM) has been instructing parents around the world for over 25 years. For more information, go to www.iaim.net

These massage strokes are based on *INFANT MASSAGE: A Handbook for Loving Parents* by Vimala McClure, the founder of the IAIM.

The IAIM is a non-profit organisation and does not endorse any product.

The benefits of regular massage may:

- Help you and your baby understand each other better
- Soothe babies and reduce crying
- Aid digestion and help relieve colic, wind and constipation

- Help babies to sleep more deeply and for longer
- Relieve nasal congestion and teething discomfort
- Help develop good muscle tone, co-ordination and suppleness
- Enhance body awareness
- Boost the immune system
- Improve skin texture
- Help calm and relax both parent and baby
- Boost parents' confidence in handling their baby

Getting started

- Choose a time when your baby is awake and alert, not too hungry or too full
- Set the scene by ensuring the room is warm and lighting not too bright
- Have what you need at hand: oil, towel, clean nappies and clothes
- Wash your hands and remove jewellery such as watches
- Make sure that you have a safe and comfortable place to do the massage and position your baby so that they can see your face clearly
- Before starting, take time to relax with a few full breaths letting go of any tension
- Remember that all babies are different, changing all the time. For instance, young babies may feel more secure if most of their clothes are left on and they feel close to their parents' body

Asking permission (a)

Only massage your baby when he or she is awake and ready to engage. 'Asking permission' to undress or to massage them helps the baby develop trust in you. This encourages a healthy attitude to being touched in a loving and respectful way.

Sometimes your baby may not be in the mood for massage, for instance if they are hungry, tired or not feeling well. It is important to watch and respond to your baby's body language and offer the massage at another time.

When you are sure the baby is ready, rub a few drops of oil into your hands as you ask your baby's permission – "Can I give you a massage?"



Remember that massage is baby-lead and adapt the pace of the strokes to your baby's response. These responses or 'baby language' are called 'infant cues'. It is important that the session is a happy time for both you and your baby.

Finish with a 'Thank You' (b)

When you and your baby feel that you have come to the end of the massage, gently say thank you. This is when you give a goodbye stroke with both hands from the shoulders to the toes or perhaps give a kiss and a cuddle or sing a little song.



SIX MONTHS PLUS

At this stage your baby will be much more active, wriggling, sitting up, crawling and trying to stand. Remember it is normal for an active baby to move around a lot, so you can be creative with the massage, working with any part of the body which is presented to you. It's also a time to introduce more fun like songs, rhymes and games. Adapt the massage strokes to your baby's more active developmental stage. Massage can help with your baby's co-ordination as well as build strength to help them prepare to walk.

Legs – rolling (a)

Leg rolling is a fun activity which increases body awareness. Once the baby shows that they enjoy the movement, you could introduce a song. Remember to slow the pace of your song down so that your baby can join in.

With your hands, roll the leg from thigh to ankle. With longer legs, adapt this stroke, rolling from knee to ankle.



Back (b)

If your baby wants to sit upright, you can adapt your massage. Massaging in this position helps to prepare them for sitting unsupported and strengthen the back muscles. It can also be soothing as a calming bedtime routine.

Swooping one hand after the other from neck to buttocks and down again. Baby might want to play with a toy whilst you are massaging.



Gentle movements (c)

Gentle movements, which are a set of simple exercises to help to develop baby's coordination, align the spine and keep your baby flexible. These movements are a fun activity for the babies. You will learn them when you attend the class. This is one example below.



Cross your baby's arms at the chest three times, alternating, which arm is over and under. Then gently stretch the arms out to the side. The rhythm is: cross-cross-open. Repeat.

Finish with a 'thank you', a kiss and a cuddle.

THANK YOU BABY. (d)

