



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.



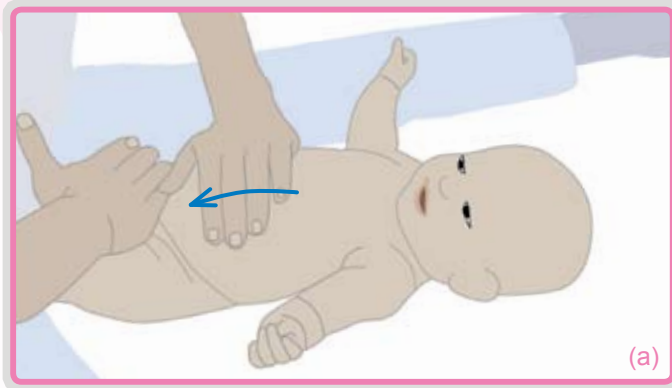
SIX WEEKS PLUS

At six weeks baby is starting to become even more responsive, they maybe more settled and ready for a fuller massage. Massage is a great way to communicate together and introduce fun and play. Here are additional strokes to add to your massage routine.

Tummy (a)

Massaging the tummy is a lovely way to help baby feel safe and secure as well as helping with tummy troubles such as colic and constipation.

If your baby is happy, you can make gentle paddling strokes on the tummy, with one hand following the other.

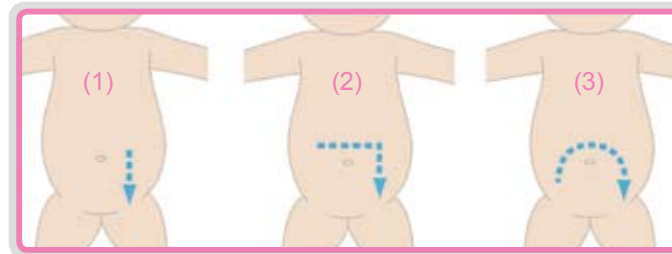


'I love you' on the tummy (b)



Begin with a resting hand.

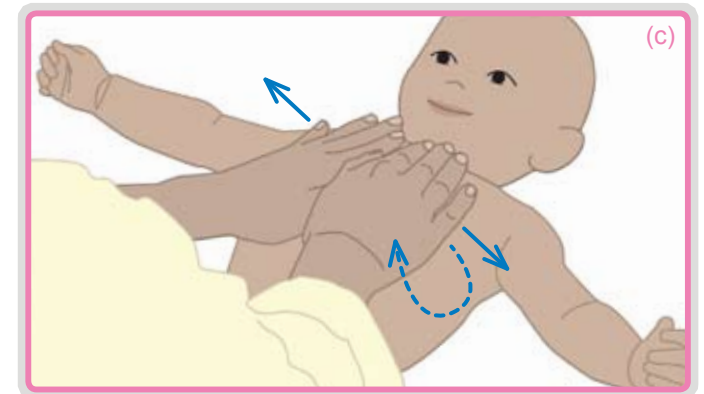
- (1) Make a single downward stroke with your right hand on the left side of your baby's tummy (your right).
- (2) Make a backward, sideways 'L', going from your baby's right to left side.
- (3) Make an upside down 'U', going from your baby's lower right side, up, across and down the left side of the baby's tummy. Say the words 'I love you' as you go through the strokes.



Chest (c)

Gentle massage of the chest can help relieve congestion problems. When sensitively touching the chest, sometimes you will need to pause and with resting hands, share your feelings together.

With both hands at the centre of the chest stroke out to the sides as if you were flattening the pages of a book. Keeping contact with your baby, glide your hands down, around and meeting in the centre again.





SIX WEEKS PLUS CONTINUED...

Touch relaxation (d)

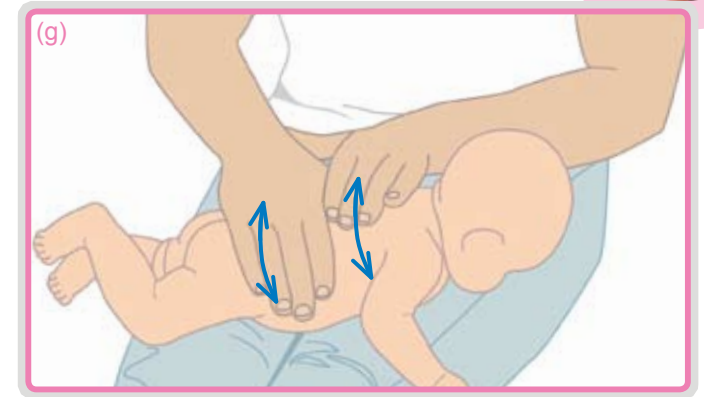
Touch relaxation can be used at any age and at any time during the massage. Sometimes babies can hold a lot of tension in their bodies and this technique on the arms and legs encourages the baby to relax.

Gently mould your hands around your babies arm or leg, asking baby to relax. Using a calm voice repeat the word 'reelax'. When you feel your baby responding, reward them with positive feedback, a smile and a kiss.



Hands (e)

This is a great way to show your baby how to relax the hands. Using the pads of your thumbs gently open their hand, roll each tiny finger between your index finger and thumb and finally stroke the top of their hand from the wrist to the fingertips.



Back (g)

Massage on the back can encourage strengthening of the neck, shoulders and arms as baby lifts their head; as well as having a calming and relaxing effect. There are many ways to position your baby, to encourage them to enjoy being on their fronts. You would learn these different positions on a baby massage class.

With baby on her front, start with both hands together at the top of the back, at right angles to the spine. Move your hands back and forth, in opposite directions, going down the back to the buttocks, then up to the shoulders, and back down again. Then swoop your hand from their neck all the way down to their feet.

Face (f)

Massaging the face can help relax tension caused by sucking, crying and with the discomfort of teething.

Babies mirror your movements and expressions. It is a lovely moment to make eye contact and have a happy time together. Make small circles along the jaw with your fingertips.

