



ISSUE # 18

Article 3 : Massaging your baby

Massage is one of the most useful skills a parent can acquire. Your baby's first sensations came from the rich sense of touch and movement on the skin surface in the womb.

At birth the transition through the birth canal massages the baby's body and stimulates all the organs into action. Touch continues to be a primary source of comfort and well being throughout infancy, in childhood and for the rest of our lives. It is essential for healthy development.

Massaging a baby is an intuitive, natural skill and is simple and uncomplicated. It has been practised in different cultures all over the world for centuries. Both mothers and fathers can easily learn to do it. It helps your baby to be comfortable with his body and enjoy an intimate and close connection with you.

The benefits of massaging your baby:

- *Enhances your relationship with your child through loving touch*
- *Calms, soothes and relaxes your baby*
- *Encourages optimal development and good posture*
- *Promotes muscular co-ordination and flexible joints*
- *Improves breathing*
- *Helps digestion, elimination and stimulates the immune system*
- *Releases tension, promotes sleep, well being, security and confidence*
- *Can be used to relieve pain and a variety of common ailments*
- *Massaging your baby is playful, loving and fun*
- *Choosing a massage oil*

It's best to use a plain organic sunflower, sweet almond or grape seed oil when massaging a very young baby. Babies are born with a wonderful sense of smell which plays an important part in their development throughout childhood.

Once your baby is two months old you can continue using a plain vegetable oil or you could introduce a ready blended pure aromatherapy baby massage oil which has the additional benefits of essential oils (see page...).

Alternatively you can blend your own aromatherapy baby massage oil by adding a few drops of essential oil to the base oil. Lavender (aids sleep, is gently antiseptic and relaxing),

Roman chamomile (soothing), rose otto (nurtures the spirit), mandarin (relaxes the digestive system, uplifting), sweet orange (balancing, raises the spirits), rosewood (stimulates the immune system and soothes), sandalwood (relaxes and enhances breathing) or frankincense (soothes and quiets) are possible choices.

Essential oils are very powerful and must be precisely measured and never used undiluted on the skin. For a baby use no more than 15 drops of essential oil to 10 tablespoons of base oil.

It's best to use organic or wild grown oils of the highest quality. These can be expensive when bought singly, which is why many parents opt for a good quality, expertly blended oil. Active Birth Organic Baby Massage Oil has been especially blended from pure organic ingredients with just the right concentration of suitable essential oils to benefit your baby.

When making your own blend, try a few drops on a tissue from the testers in the shop to see which smell, or combination of smells appeals to you most. Choose one or a combination of two to start with. After mixing, test the diluted oil first on a little patch of your baby's skin and wait for half an hour to check for any sign of redness which would indicate an allergic reaction.

When using the oil, remember to check your baby's reaction to the smell. You can also mix a few drops of any essential oil you buy in a little milk and add this

to your baby's bath water.

Be sure to consult an experienced aromatherapist and your physician first, if your baby has a skin condition or other disorder. Aromatherapy can help skin conditions such as inflammation, nappy rash, eczema, psoriasis and cradle cap but professional guidance is essential. See recommended reading to find out more about the properties of essential oils and how to use aromatherapy for babies.

Preparing for a massage session

Make sure the room is very warm, with low lighting or soft daylight and that it is peaceful and quiet. You may like to put on some tranquil music in the background. You can also massage your baby out of doors (in the shade) if the weather is hot.

When massaging your baby, it's safest to work on the floor on a carpeted surface or on a folded blanket. Choose a comfortable sitting position, maybe sit on a cushion or with your back supported against the sofa or by a wall, legs crossed or extended. Or kneel Japanese style with your knees apart and then sit back on your heels. If being on the floor doesn't work for you, prepare a safe surface at table height.

You need a soft surface for your baby such as a thick folded towel or a towel over a baby fleece. Have another towel around as it is very likely that your baby will urinate and a change of nappy and clothes for afterwards.

Have some warm oil beside you in a bowl or non spill bottle and make sure your hands are clean and warm.

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