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Article 4 : Try this: Baby massage - Feet and legs

When your baby is approaching two months old you can start to massage her more formally and if your baby enjoys being massaged, you can do this once a day.

Once she begins to crawl, it will be harder to get her to stay still for long enough and she will prefer massage combined with movement. The massage sequence should last from about ten to twenty minutes, as babies have a relatively short attention span. So do each stroke for only about twenty seconds or for four or five repeats then move on.

Choose a time of day when your baby is awake and in a playful mood, never immediately after a feed, or when your baby is hungry. Or the best time may be immediately after bathing in the late afternoon or early evening.

This can help to settle a fretful baby and induce more restful sleep. Its good to massage at more or less the same time every day so your baby looks forward to it.

Let your baby be your guide and if she cries or doesn't soon relax into the massage, then don't persist and try again on another occasion. Always stop when your baby lets you know she has had enough or is not in the mood and don't massage your baby when she is unwell.

With the room well prepared, undress your baby so she is completely naked. Put plenty of warm oil on your hands and keep replenishing it so your hands glide smoothly over your baby's skin.

Relax your hands as you work and begin gently, working very slowly and rhythmically. Over time as your confidence increases, the pressure you are using will naturally become a little stronger. It may surprise you eventually how firmly you can work and how utterly relaxed your baby may become.

While you are working enjoy the pleasure of communicating silently with your baby through your eyes and also through touch. You can also sing or talk to her as you are massaging, bending over occasionally to blow on her feet or to give her a kiss. Every massage should end with a cuddle and then usually, a feed.

Start the massage with legs, feet and hips

Place your baby on her back so you can maintain eye contact. Oil your hands really well and begin by massaging one foot, concentrating on the tops and sides and gently massaging each toe by rolling it gently between your thumb and forefinger.

Continue for twenty seconds and then repeat with the other foot. Massaging the feet is relaxing and is a good way to establish contact.

Now start from the top of the thigh and pull the leg downwards with a smooth 'hand over hand' movement, to include the ankle and the foot. Continue for about 20 seconds and then move on to the other leg.

When you have finished, hold both legs at the ankles and gently 'bicycle' them a few times, bending one leg while you straighten the other. Massaging the legs helps to coordinate muscular movement and maintains flexibility.

Clap your baby's feet together gently so that her knees roll outwards. Use your right hand to take her right foot to her navel. Keep it in this position while you massage the back of her right thigh and buttock with your left hand. Do this for about 30 seconds, then gently hold by the ankle and softly shake the leg straight and repeat with the other leg. This encourages mobility of the hip joints.

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