

How to approach infant massage

Massage is a form of communication. It is important that it is approached with respect for your baby. Gently place your hands on your baby's stomach or chest and look into his eyes and ask 'Would you like a massage?' By doing this you are communicating what is about to happen to your baby and offering them a choice. This will give you time to observe your baby's body language and establish whether he is in the mood to enjoy a massage. As your baby becomes familiar with this routine he will be able to recognise your signals and clearly respond to them with approval.

If your baby fusses or cries during any point of the massage stop massaging, talk to him and give him a cuddle. Sometimes he may just be asking for a little break, or he may be telling you he wants to stop until another time. Again, by watching your baby's signals you will be able to offer a massage to suit his needs.

A baby should not be massaged if he is:

- ✎ Asleep, tired, hungry, crying or fretful
- ✎ Unwell, or has a raised temperature
- ✎ Has undergone recent surgery
- ✎ Has an infectious skin condition, bruising, fractures or open wounds. With the exception of the infectious skin condition it may be possible for the unaffected areas to be massaged
- ✎ It is recommended that massage should be avoided for a few days after vaccinations

Where is the best place to massage your baby?

- ✎ Choose a room that will be warm enough to undress your baby in
- ✎ Ensure that you are dressed in comfortable clothes so that you are not too hot. Remove any jewellery that may scratch or dangle in your baby's face. If you have long hair you may feel more comfortable if you tie it back during the massage
- ✎ Be aware of the environment. Are the lights too bright? Is it noisy? Are there any strong smells? It is important that your baby is comfortable and not over-stimulated so that he can relax
- ✎ Place a change mat on the floor covered with a towel. This will provide a safe and suitable massage area for your baby to lie on. Have another towel handy for during and after the massage in case your baby becomes cold or wets the original towel
- ✎ Have close to hand a spare nappy, baby wipes or tissues and of course your massage oil. Always ensure that your massage oil has been warmed to room temperature and has been decanted into a small plastic bottle or saucer for ease of use and safety
- ✎ Be aware of your sitting position so that you are comfortable when massaging your baby. Sit on a cushion and, if you can, place yourself so that you can rest your back against a wall
- ✎ When your baby is old enough to hold a toy he may enjoy playing with a small teddy or rattle whilst being massaged

After massage advice

- ✎ Remove any excess oil from your baby's skin with a towel
- ✎ **Never expose your baby's recently oiled skin to the sun**
- ✎ Your baby may be thirsty after his massage, so have a drink handy