

The Benefits of Infant Massage

by Elaine Fogel-Schneider, P.H.D., C.I.M.I.

In the Psycho-Social Domain

Benefits to the Infant of receiving massage

- Promotes bonding and attachment
- Promotes body/mind/spirit connection
- Increases Self-Esteem
- Increases sense of love, acceptance, respect, and trust
- Enhances communication

Benefits to the Parent of giving massage

- Improves ability to read infant's cues
- Improves synchrony between caregiver and infant
- Promotes bonding
- Increases confidence in parenting
- Increases communication - verbal and non-verbal
- Improves relaxation
- Provides time to share and quality time
- Promotes parenting skills

In the Physiological/Physical Growth Domain:

Benefits to the Infant of receiving massage

- Improves body awareness
- Improves relaxation and accumulated stress
- Stimulates circulation
- Strengthen digestive, circulatory, and gastrointestinal systems which can lead to weight gain.
- Reduces discomfort from teething, congestion, gas, colic, and emotional stress.
- Improves muscle tone coordination
- Increases elimination, circulation, and respiration
- Improves sleep patterns
- Increases hormonal function

Benefits to parent of giving massage

- Improves sense of well-being
- Reduces blood pressure
- Reduces stress

- Improves overall health

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Massage with oil has more positive effects on normal infants

Authors: T. Field, S. Schanberg, M. Davalos, and J. Malphurs

The use of massage with infants is as old as the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) in China. Infant massage also has strong historical roots in Ayurvedic medicine in India around 1800 B.C. At least two volumes have been written on infant massage techniques and anecdotal accounts of its therapeutic benefits for various infant problems including colic and sleep problems.



However, very little empirical research has been conducted to document the benefits of massage for infants except for research on infants at risk due to a variety of conditions. Sixty one-month-old normal infants were randomly assigned to a massage group with oil and a massage group without oil. Massage had a soothing/calming influence on the infants, particularly when given with oil. The infants who received massage with oil were less active, showed fewer stress behaviors and head averting, and their saliva cortisol levels decreased more. In addition, vagal activity increased more following massage with oil versus massage without oil.