

# Infant Massage

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Touch is such a powerful bonding activity that happens between parent and child. Massage affects the baby's mind, body, and soul. It is just as necessary as vitamins and food to the infant. The skin is the largest organ of the body and most likely the most important organ, besides the human brain. Humans cannot survive without touch but could survive if deaf or blind.

Touch is a means of communication, whether positive or negative. Many babies in the NICU experience much negative touch in order to be kept alive...its usually task-oriented, procedural, negative and painful. Infant massage is one of the most effective means to counterbalance negative touch in the NICU. Infant massage provides containment, comfort and facilitates parent bonding. But did you know that infant massage for premature and full-term infants promotes healthy brain development?

Massage also helps the body in many ways such as improved circulation, aids in digestion, helps with weight gain, reduces muscle stress to promote relaxation and deeper sleep states. As stated above, besides Kangaroo Care, infant massage is one of the best ways to bond with your baby. A parent's touch is crucial, whether your baby is in the NICU or at home. Nurturing touch helps with attachment, as well as, comfort. It also helps parents to learn about their baby's responses and improved handling.

The type of touch provided to the infant should be a "listening touch", firm but gentle. Never do light massage as it causes more stress to the baby. Massage strokes should be slow, rhythmical and contained and you can complete it where it is warm and inviting. As a parent, completing infant massage act as a powerful means of touch, is our most intimate and powerful form of communication between humans.

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