



Gentle Movements

These movements gently stretch baby's arms and legs, massage the stomach and pelvis and align the spine. Be gentle and have fun with them, incorporating rhymes and games.

1. Cross Arms

Cross your baby's arms at the chest three times, alternating which arm is over and under. Then gently stretch the arms out to the sides.

The rhythm is: *cross - cross - cross - open*.
Repeat.

2. Cross Arm and Leg

Hold one arm at the wrist and the opposite leg at the ankle. Gently bring the arm down to the ribcage and the foot up toward the shoulder (allow the knee to bend), crossing the leg and arm so that the arm goes to the outside of the leg, and cross again so the arm is under the leg, then cross once more with the arm over the leg. Now stretch them out in opposite directions.

The rhythm is: *cross - cross - cross - open*.
Repeat with the opposite arm and leg.

3. Cross Legs

Cross the legs over the tummy three times, alternating which leg is over and under. Then gently stretch the legs out straight, toward you.

The rhythm is: *cross - cross - cross - straighten*.
Repeat.

4. Up and Down

Push the knees together up into the tummy, then stretch them out straight. If the baby resists bending and/or straightening the legs, bounce them gently and encourage baby to relax. Repeat several times.

5. Bicycle

Gently push the knees into the tummy, one after the other, then bounce them out straight to relax.

The rhythm is: *push - push - push - straighten*.
Repeat.

Adaptations for your growing child.

Now you have the full program, and an understanding of all the massage strokes and yoga moves, you can adapt it to suit your very own baby.

Your baby will start to develop their own personality and be able to share their likes and preferences with you. It's an amazing time to share with them.

There are a few pointers to remember - keep in tune with your baby's development stages, embrace, and roll with it. You don't ever have to stop massaging them, no matter what their age.

Here are some ideas on how you can alter what we know to keep in tune with your child.

Crawling and Toddler

When your baby starts to crawl, the quiet alert stage we look for with massage will become less prominent. For your baby it's going to be all about the movement. You may find that it's much harder for them to lie still for a full body massage.

This is absolutely normal. If you have a set time for a massage, say after a bath, your child is more likely to be willing to stay still. They thrive on routine, and it will be normal for them to enjoy the relaxation and comfort a massage brings.

Take any opportunity you can to do a few strokes through clothing before they whizz off again. Try a little massage while having a nappy change, you may find it easier to change them.

We have already used a rhyme and song in our massage, extend this further and add in your little one's favorite song and use the strokes where you can.

If you plan to return to work, try and make a massage part of your routine when you're back together. It can help soothe and relax you both after a busy day. Remember those positive hormones! There is a study about eye gazing with a mum and baby using real time MRI scans. The study showed that gazing into your baby's eyes actually made the baby's brain waves synchronize with their mum's. Massage is a perfect way to maximize eye gazing and get you both back in tune.

3-6 years - The golden age of imagination.

At this stage of your little one's childhood, they will be developing their imagination. They love stories and using their imagination.

If they have a favorite story adapt the strokes to act it out. Make up a story using their best loved characters.

They will know the power of the word NO, so we need to alter the way we ask permission. Instead of asking a closed question, i.e., "Would you like a massage?" which would require a yes or no answer, give them a choice of 2 areas of the body, for example, "Would you like your arms or legs massaged?" This lets your child be in control of which parts of their body they would like you to massage.

Once your little one is toilet trained, we advise you to massage with underwear on. This allows them to get an early start on body autonomy and is another way to show them respect. If, however, they communicate to you they would like to be naked then go ahead.

Let them massage you. You will both get the benefits and it's a fun alternative.

Continue with their favorite rhymes and songs and add in any new ones.

Carry on with any routine you have. Try to do any massage daily even if it's just a hand stroke or a few back strokes while having a cuddle.

You can use the touch relaxation, or a containment hold as an alternative - it's all about nurturing touch.

7-10 years old - The age of idols and superheroes.

At this age you will need to think outside the box even more. However, if you have kept the massage up, your child will seek out the comfort it brings. Their body is so in tune with their positive hormones, they will know exactly what they need to access them - a massage from you!

They will be growing rapidly, and you will no doubt find it difficult to massage a very long leg all in one go. We advise that you split the massage up, so first massage above the knee and then below.

You can use the weather report at any age group, you can even have a family massage session - sit in a circle with your back to each other and through clothing act out the weather report massage.

If your child has a favorite sporting idol, they will be aware of sports massages. Treat your message in the same way.

Talk about your day and share this one-to-one time. Even now you need that time to connect.

Massage is a language all on its own, so you don't need to share any words. You could play a song they enjoy or adapt a dance routine to a massage.

Your child may prefer to be massaged through clothing and that's fine.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children who are massaged on a regular basis are less likely to bully, have a positive image of themselves, have self-respect, do better in education and create better friendships.

Teenagers - key word is RESPECT.

At this age your child will be directed by hormones, puberty, secrets, and friendships.

If you try to start massage at this age, chances are a child isn't going to be interested. However, if you keep up the positive touch, cuddles, affection and love it will still be a 2-way street and they will appreciate the boost in positive hormones. This can help balance out the hormones playing an active part in puberty.

At this stage you can use aromatherapy oils, add their favorite scent or one that relaxes, to your base oil and enhance their massage.

You may only get a chance to massage a hand or foot and ankle while watching T.V. but that is enough. Their body is so in tune with a massage the benefits will flood through them.

If you have a daughter, then try some massage or reflexology to ease period pain.

You can use chest massage on their back if they like. It's invaluable for exam stress! If they're cramming or worried about an upcoming exam give a back massage through their clothing while sitting in a chair. Or alternatively use the touch relaxation.

DID YOU KNOW?

When your teenager starts to date and fall in young love, their body is flooded to overflowing with oxytocin - the love drug. This love can be fleeting, and the oxytocin is suddenly taken away.

Research has shown that the effect the loss of oxytocin has on the body is as powerful and painful as heroin withdrawal. No wonder they call it lovesickness! You can help your teen through this difficult time. You have spent years nurturing oxytocin in their body through massage. Spend some time replacing that lost oxytocin and love through massage and nurturing touch. It will make them feel just that little bit better and loved.

To sum up

Have a massage in the forefront of your mind with the time you spend with your child. It's not just for the time they're a baby, it's for all their childhood. Look for any opportunity to get even the smallest of massages in, every single stroke makes the world of difference.

There has been an ongoing independent study on our program, and it has followed babies who were massaged right through their childhood. The results showed that these children grew up to be model members of society. Their bodies had learnt how to access and use positive hormones in the correct way. They didn't take drugs or any substance to create that rush.

They had an amazing understanding of themselves which allowed them to make correct choices in friendships and relationships. They knew how to respect themselves and others and were able to set healthy boundaries. They respected their body. They found it easier to communicate their wishes and feelings and listen to others. Their path in education was much smoother and reached their own potential.

We all want our babies to grow up to be decent human beings as well as valued members of society. It really all does start here, in babyhood. Massage is such an easy way to create a wonderful adult. Believe it or not, if every person was massaged from a baby, we would have world peace!

Always keep that love going,

Evelyn. xx