

### **Intentional Touch physiological and psychological benefits for infants:**

- Increased strength and regulation in respiratory, circulatory, and gastrointestinal functions.
- Improved muscle tone and motor skills.
- Soothing stimulation to the developing nervous system, sensory nerves, and motor nerves.
- Stimulation to the growing brain cells, influencing mental development.
- Healing effects on birth trauma by soothing strained or pulled muscles.
- Enhanced infant sense of touch.
- Relief from daily stress that builds up from new encounters.
- Relief from gas pain caused by colic.

### **Intentional Touch benefits for infants and parents:**

- Enhanced nurturing of the parent-infant relationship to promote bonding.
- Promotion of a healthy body awareness and self-image.
- Encouragement of parents to relax and focus on their babies.
- Increased confidence in parents as caregivers.

### **Intentional Touch Guidelines**

- Infant massage should be performed in a calm, relaxing environment. Try to minimize bright lights, chilly drafts, and loud noises.
- Pick a comfortable spot to perform the massage.
- Choose a time when the baby is quiet but alert, not too tired, and has not just eaten.
- The person performing the massage should also be relaxed.
- Use an edible oil, such as a vegetable or nut oil (almond is great). Remember, babies put hands and feet in their mouths!
- Pour a small amount of oil into the palm of the hand and allow it to warm before applying to the baby's skin.
- A small amount of oil should be tested on baby's skin the day before to be certain that it does not cause irritation.
- Encourage the parent to listen to the baby's cues. If the baby is not enjoying the massage, end it and try again later.
- The touch should be gentle but firm. Two to three repetitions of each stroke are enough at first. As parent and baby become more accustomed to the touch sessions can be lengthened.
- Sing to your baby
- Maintain eye contact with your baby.

## ***Feet, Legs, and Arms***



**This Little Piggy:** It helps to massage the feet and Toes first so that the baby can easily see what the parent is doing. Perform the following strokes on each leg and repeat them on the arms.

**Milking:** Parent's right hand holds baby's right foot. Grasp the right thigh with the left hand and gently squeeze the leg, stroking from the thigh to the ankle, in a milking motion. Now reverse the motion going from ankle to thigh.



**Clay Worm:** Picture the baby's leg as a piece of soft clay. Roll the leg from knee to ankle as if sculpting a clay worm. Finish by gently shaking the leg.



**Foot Massage:** While holding the heel in one hand, use the other hand to gently flex the foot toward the shin. Then use the thumbs to gently press over the heel and sole of the foot. Gently squeeze each little toe. End by drawing circles around the anklebones with the thumbs.

## ***Tummy and Back***

Perform the following strokes on the chest and abdomen and repeat them on the back. A note of caution: When working on the back, avoid pressing directly on the spine and avoid massaging an infant's tummy until the umbilical cord has fallen off and has completely healed.



**Open Book:** Place the hands flat on the middle of the baby's chest, at the sternum. Push out along the baby's rib cage to the shoulders, as if

smoothing the pages of a book or the wrinkles in a tablecloth. Finish the stroke by bringing the hands down toward the belly button. Another way to picture this is to draw a heart with the hands, using the same landmarks (sternum, shoulders, navel).



**Paddle Wheel:** Place the left hand on the baby's tummy with the little finger at the base of the rib cage. Stroke downward. Follow the left hand with the right hand. Alternate hands in a paddle-wheel motion. Next, hold the baby's feet together in one hand while lifting the legs up as if to diaper the baby. With the other hand, perform the paddle-wheel motion on the back.

This is a great massage to help get rid of gas. When using the paddle wheel on the back, do not press directly on the spine—stay to either side of it.



**The "I Love U" Stroke:** With the fingers, trace the letter "I" down the baby's left side, starting at the base of the ribs. Then trace an inverted "L," starting on the baby's right side and stroking across the belly, then down on the left side (fingers end up left of the navel). Next, trace an inverted "U," stroking from low on the baby's right side, then up and around the navel and back down the left side.

### ***Head and Face***



**Peekaboo:** Parent's hand covers the baby's face. Gently press on the forehead with the fingertips. Next, push out to the side of the face and gently press the temples. With the thumbs, press lightly on the eyelids. Move the thumbs to the bridge of the nose and push down lightly, then move the hands down and across the cheeks.



**Getting Cheeky:** Using the fingertips, massage gently in small circles around both sides of the baby's jaw, just by the earlobes. Go over and around the back of the ears, making a big loop. Then, push the skin under the jaw up, forming a sort of double chin.

**Overall Head and Face:** While cradling (cupping) the baby's head in the hands, gently massage the scalp using small circular motions (as if shampooing). Avoid the fontanelle, or soft spot, on the top of the head. Massage the ears between the thumb and index finger. Trace a heart shape with the fingers, starting at the center of the forehead, out to the temples, and down to the chin. Place the thumbs between the baby's eyebrows and stroke from the center out to the temples. Repeat this same stroke for the (closed) eye-lids. Stroke from the bridge of the baby's nose out to the cheeks using the thumbs. With the fingertips, gently massage in small circles over the baby's jaw. End with the heart-shape stroke.

**Finish infant massage with light, feathery strokes down the whole body, known as effleurage.**

## **BABY EXERCISE**

An exercise program for babies? According to research, babies in movement programs generally talk earlier, have better appetites, sleep more soundly, and experience greater acceleration in their motor development than babies who are not exercised. Infant movements also accelerate the development of coordination and agility, as well as increase flexibility and strength (Olkin, 1992).

### **Infant Movement Program Guidelines**

- Use a soft surface to place the baby on, such as a mat or a folded blanket.
- Keep sessions to a maximum of twenty minutes, and do not allow participation in more than two sessions a day.
- Parents should pay attention to the baby's cues—if the baby is crying or acting agitated, the session should stop.
- Do not exercise a hungry or tired baby or a baby that has just eaten.
- Use gentle, fluid movements. Avoid quick, jerky movements. NEVER force a joint into a position!
- Begin by moving the joints that are closest to the torso and work outward.
- Sing and talk to your baby during the session.
- Have fun! It should be playful, not mechanical!
- Repeat each exercise 5–10 times.
- Exercise must be age-appropriate. If a baby can't hold up his or her head, the parent must support the baby's head.
- Very young infants may be too weak to begin these exercises. Young infants startle easily and quickly become over stimulated.



**Infant Movements Chest stretch:**

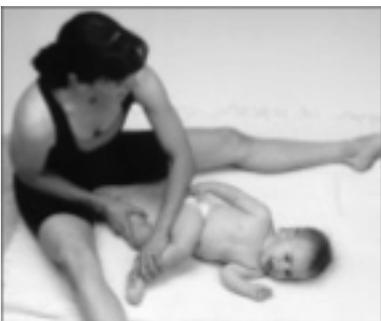
With baby clasping the parent's thumb, hold the baby's hand and bring his or her arms out wide. Now bring the arms across the chest.



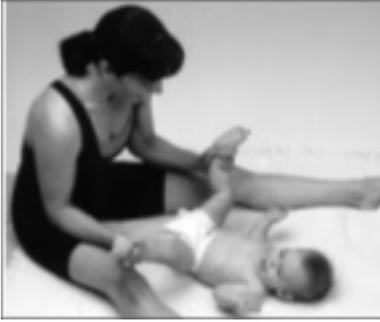
**Opposite arm to leg stretch:** Parent's right hand holds baby's left hand and parent's left hand holds baby's right foot. Bring arm down and leg up until hand and foot meet. Repeat with opposite arm and leg.



**Bicycle:** Each of parent's hands holds each of baby's legs. Gently move the legs back and forth in a pedaling motion.



**Leg over stretch:** Each of parent's hands holds each of baby's legs. Gently cross the baby's left leg over the right (the hip will probably come up off the mat). Return to starting position and repeat by crossing right leg over left leg.



**V legs:** Each of parent's hands holds each of baby's legs. Lift legs up, as if diapering. Slowly separate each leg into a "V." Do not force legs too far open. Return to starting position and repeat.



**Fanny circles:** One of parent's hands holds both legs while the other hand cradles the buttocks. Make a circular motion with the fanny while keeping the legs fairly straight. Circle in one direction, then the other.



**Toes-to-nose stretch:** Parent grasps the baby's feet and gently stretches the legs toward him or her, then up to the baby's nose. Some babies will not be able to reach their nose—do not force it!



**Baby sit-ups:** Hold baby's hands (let baby grasp parent's hands). Slowly pull the baby up into a sitting position. DO NOT let baby's head fall backward! If the baby isn't strong enough to hold his or her head, one of parent's hands holds the baby's hands while the other hand supports the head. Slowly lower the baby back down.

## MOM AND BABY EXERCISE

Incorporating your baby into a regular exercises can be fun for both you and your baby and provides you with an opportunity to recondition muscles that may have become weakened from pregnancy. Babies love to watch their parents work out, especially when there is music! Get Moving...



**Exercises Curl-backs:** Lay baby on lap (thighs) during abdominal curl-back exercises. Hold onto baby's hands.



**Airplane ride:** Lie on back and bend knees to chest. Place baby on lower legs (shins) and pretend to give him or her an airplane ride. Never release your grasp of the baby.



**Kiss-the-baby crunches:** In same position as airplane ride, perform abdominal crunches. As mother curls up, baby kisses are given. Older babies can sit on mom's tummy.



**Baby leg lifts:** Lie on back with knees at a 90-degree angle and baby resting on lower legs. Lower legs, moving heels toward buttocks, then lift legs back to starting position. Keep lower back pressed against the floor throughout entire movement.



**Horsy ride:** Have baby sit on mom's tummy during bridging. Baby will feel like he or she is going on a "horsy ride."



**Flying baby:** Bench press while holding baby rather than weights. Baby must be able to hold head up for this exercise.



**Kiss-the-baby push-ups:** Lay baby underneath mom while mom does push-ups. Mom kisses baby each time she lowers her chest toward the floor.



**Leg extensions:** Sit on the edge of a chair with both knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place baby on one shin. Hold onto baby's hands and straighten the leg that the baby is on. Repeat on the other leg.