

Is Infant Massage appropriate for my child?

Touch is the First Communication

Frederick Leboyer, author of Loving Hands said,

“Touching is the first communication a baby receives. The first language of its development is through the skin.”

Touch is the first sense to develop long before the baby is born and after birth remains one of the most fundamental needs to nourish the infant emotionally, physically and neurologically. Montagu wrote, "Human beings cannot survive without touch; it is a basic behavioural need"

Massage can offer benefits to both infants and parents and this is applicable also to those in "special situations" including those who are deafblind.

Benefits for parents

Joining a massage class can benefit parents/carers and baby in many ways.

- Disability and medical conditions can interrupt the bonding process particularly if there has been lengthy hospital stays and medical interventions. parents may feel disempowered alongside "experts" in the condition. The massage class can enable parents to develop a loving relationship with their baby, become attuned to the baby's needs and become expert on the subject of their child.
- Finding space and time to turn off worries and stress can promote a sense of relaxation and well-being for parents.
- Parents of children with special needs often feel reluctant to join in with mainstream groups. They may believe their needs are not met or feel self conscious about their child's different responses and behaviours. In Infant Massage classes they can feel equal.
- Classes can support parents feeling isolated by providing opportunities to spend time with other parents and carers within a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Observing positive responses to touch and loving interaction can reassure parents that they are able to offer something meaningful to their baby.

Benefits for baby

Whatever condition or disability all babies can enjoy and benefit from aspects of touch

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- Bonding and communication are enhanced in an intimate and pleasurable interaction.
- Massage and loving touches promote relaxation which can improve sleep patterns
- Massage can help bring about relief to stress, teething, colic or digestive problems.
- Stimulating baby through touch helps encourage the development of the nervous system which promotes neurological and physical development.

M. F. Ashley Montagu Touching: Human Significance of the Skin