

Benefits to Infants

Relaxation

We often think of stress and adults but do not think about babies and stress. When under stress a human being produces stress hormones ACTH from the pituitary and cortisol, epinephrine and nor-epinephrine from the adrenal glands.

Infants immediately after birth have high levels of stress hormones. All of the early activities can produce stress in an infant because they are all unknown. Lots of stimulation can overload an infant. Tactile contact, eye contact, and heartbeat sounds are all signals that parents and care givers can provide to infants and babies in order to help decrease stress.

1. Relaxing touch helps to bring the infant, as it does the adult, into a more relaxed state with our parasympathetic nervous system dominating.
2. Massage also helps infants to take in stimulation and respond with relaxation
3. Allows infants to release pent up frustration
4. It also allows infants to become more aware of their bodies and which parts are most sensitive and need relaxing.

Stimulation

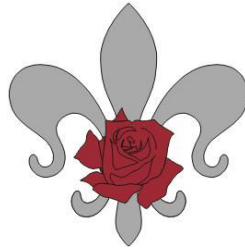
1. Natural sensory stimulation speeds myelination of the brain/nervous system. The myelin coating is not complete at birth and tactile stimulation speeds the process.
2. All of the activities involved with the massage help in development. Gazing into the mother's face is similar to and infant being attracted to and gazing at the mother's nipple during breastfeeding. The stimulation of gazing helps to speed nerve myelination.
3. In addition, the sounds of the care giver's voice during massage also helps in development. Using a high pitched voice appeals to the babies right brain.

Relief

Massage can help to relieve common infant distresses such as gas, bloating, constipations, congestion and emotional stress.

Overall Growth & Development

1. Touch stimulates growth promoting hormones and increases enzymes that make cells more responsive to growth promoting hormones.
2. Touch promotes brain growth. Studies show that newborns receiving extra touch display enhanced neurological development. Researchers believe that touch promotes the growth of myelin around nerve cells.
3. Touch improves digestion by increasing digestive enzymes.



Benefits to Parents

There are many benefits to parents or care givers.

1. Many new parents are nervous about connecting with their child and infant massage helps to provide parents with a way to touch and connect with their child.
2. Infant massage is a wonderful way for working parents to connect with their child when getting home. Many times parents are rushed and it is difficult to change pace from work to home with baby. Infant massage is a perfect opportunity for the parent to relax with their child and have special time with their child.
3. If a mother is experiencing postpartum depression, infant massage is a way for the mom to provide needed contact with her child. This in turn helps ease the guilty feelings that many depressed moms experience during this time. They feel that they have helped their child even when not feeling well themselves.
4. When a child is not sleeping well, has colic, or is irritable – infant massage is one tool that a parent can use to help their child. This empowers a parent at a time when they may feel helpless and overwhelmed.
5. Infant massage provides a great opportunity for Dads who are not experienced with small babies to learn a way in which to care for their child and feel competent in that care.