

## MASSAGE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY

### A Time of Change

“You’re pregnant”

These words are the signal for enormous change. Pregnancy can have significant impact, not only on your present habits and lifestyle, but on your body, too, as it alters to accommodate the new life within you. Many of these changes happen rapidly and seemingly of their own accord, adding to the anxiety and stress you might already be feeling.

Finding ways to manage extra stress during this time is essential for your health and that of your partner and your baby. At every stage of pregnancy, from conception to birth, utilizing relaxation techniques will assist the baby’s development and you own sense of well-being, helping to ensure that pregnancy and delivery go smoothly. Massage can be an essential ingredient in your stress reduction program.

### Before the Birth

Just taking the time for an hour away for yourself, adrift in the comforting world of massage therapy, can put you in touch with your body and help you gain perspective and balance, thereby alleviating untold stress.

In addition to reducing stress, you’ll find that a regular dose of massage therapy can:

- increase the flow of oxygen and blood to your tissues, accelerating the flow of nutrients to both you and your child.
- relieve the backaches and other pains often experienced during pregnancy
- decrease swelling and edema as it can drain toxins from your body.
- help you to come to terms with your new, evolving body image

Massage during pregnancy is quite safe; however, you should be sure to ask your doctor before beginning any kind of massage program.

### During Labor

Giving birth is often a long and arduous process. The work of repeatedly tensing muscles leaves a mother exhausted and adds to stress.

Certain massage techniques can reduce your discomfort and provide a revitalizing respite, relaxing you between contractions so you can gather strength for the next round. Having your partner or spouse learn a few simple techniques can be an excellent way to involve him in the birth process.

### After the Birth

The relaxation that massage provides not only calms you during the stressful post-partum period – it can also speed your recovery. Some massage therapists even receive special training to better address the needs of the post-partum mother.

### Massaging Baby, Too

Research shows that touch is as essential to proper human development as food, warmth, and shelter. Exposing your baby to regular massage can:

- help your infant digest feedings better, speeding the baby's weight gain and growth
- help to build muscle tone, coordination, and brain functioning
- stimulate your child's circulation, helping to heal any birth-related trauma
- calm your baby's nervous system
- establish a pattern of relaxation at an early age, one that your child can follow into adulthood
- counterbalance frightening, negative messages about touch, teaching lessons about positive touch your child will carry throughout life
- help you and your baby grow closer to each other