

Chapter 1

Welcoming Your Baby into the Wonderful World of Massage

In This Chapter

- ▶ Realizing the importance of attachment
 - ▶ Getting a brief introduction to massage technique
 - ▶ Anticipating the benefits of massaging your baby
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You have so many good reasons to massage your baby, and this chapter introduces you to the biggies. We discuss how and why you can use massage as a tool to foster and enhance your attachment with your baby. We also touch on the physical benefits of baby massage — including how you can use massage to help treat and prevent certain illnesses.

Along the way, we introduce you to the basics of Swedish massage — the foundation of the techniques we demonstrate in later chapters. And we explain how you can adapt your massage routine to accommodate the needs of babies at different ages and stages of development.

Focusing on Quality, Not Quantity

If you recently became a parent, you may have spent the last nine months preparing for birth and connecting emotionally with your baby. Or maybe your pregnancy was unplanned and your experience has been laced with anxiety and self-doubt. Perhaps infertility plagued your attempts to get pregnant, and now your dreams of parenthood are finally realized, either through birth or adoption.

Regardless of how your baby came into your life, or what your parenting circumstances are, baby massage is a great way to create a relationship with your little one. Spending even five minutes massaging your baby each day creates a space for bonding and relaxation for both of you that can stay in your baby's memory for a lifetime.



We have all heard that the quality of time we spend with our children — not the quantity — makes a difference. There is no greater manifestation of this truth, no better example or opportunity, than to give love to your child through massage. Time spent massaging your baby involves genuine, undivided attention that is experienced as love and pleasure. Intend your massage as a gift, and it will be received as such.

Recognizing the Need for Touch

In other cultures — which some people might label primitive — mothers typically carry their babies with them all the time. These mothers are very attuned to their babies' needs and respond to them quickly and naturally with ease. This bonding approach to parenting breeds intuition and compassion, and it begins with touch.

Considering our changing values

Before the inventions of anesthesia and baby formula, all mothers felt the birth of their children and the sensation of their children suckling on the breast. Since these inventions, values have changed in our culture, as have conventional wisdoms.

The choices many parents now make when giving birth are based on cost- and time-effectiveness — if not for the parents themselves, at least for the hospital and its staff. Nature's primal callings have been minimized by a healthcare profession that has to manage huge demands on its time. *Epidurals* (a form of anesthesia delivered through the spine) are the norm, and Caesarean deliveries are performed in as many as a quarter of all pregnancies. During much of the twentieth century, formula was touted as the best option for mother and baby; breastfeeding was considered an inferior feeding method and an inconvenience.

We certainly understand that sometimes Caesareans and epidurals are medically necessary, and some of the changes that have occurred have resulted in greater health for mothers and babies.

However, we also recognize another result of our changing values: Opportunities for touch and bonding between parent and child have been reduced.

Another factor that impedes the bond between parent and child is a detached approach to parenting, which nurtures laziness or apathy. Parents are only human, and the demands of everyday life, particularly with an infant or young child, are enormous. *Detachment parenting* is an invitation to do and care less. We all have within us the capacity to be lazy or believe we deserve a break. That's why it's important to consciously make a commitment to attachment-focused nurturing and bonding. If you invest energy today, you will reap rewards throughout your life.

Choosing attachment parenting

So what exactly does the term *attachment parenting* mean? Attachment parenting is a philosophy of parenting that emphasizes creating a secure attachment with your baby. Just about all the advice we give in this book is aimed at encouraging attachment parenting. This parenting style is about being sensitive to your children, getting to know them and their needs, and relying on your own intuition as a parent.

Using the right tools

While there aren't any specific rules or guidelines to follow to practice attachment parenting, here are some tools you can use that make a secure attachment with your child more likely:



- ✓ Massage your baby.
- ✓ Breastfeed.
- ✓ Avoid separations.
- ✓ Co-sleep (see Chapter 3).
- ✓ Wear your baby in a sling (see the sidebar “The art of baby wearing” later in this chapter).
- ✓ Bond with your baby immediately after birth (see Chapter 3).
- ✓ Respond to your baby's cries.
- ✓ Feed your baby on cue, not on a schedule.



Not all these tools will work for you, your baby, or your family. That's why relying on your intuition is so important. You can formula-feed your baby and sleep in separate rooms and still be practicing attachment parenting.

Seeing the benefits

To many people, the term *attachment parenting* probably sounds scary. After all, we want our children to grow up and be independent, not attached to our hips for the rest of our lives, right?

A better term to describe this parenting style would probably be *healthy interdependent promoting parenting*. But that's just too much of a mouthful.



Whatever you want to name it, this approach to parenting has many benefits:

- ✓ Your baby learns to trust you.
- ✓ Your baby grows into a sensitive and empathic child and adult.
- ✓ Your baby learns *interdependence*: how to care about and connect with others in a compassionate and cooperative way.
- ✓ Because attachment-parented babies spend less time crying than others, their energy goes into growing and learning. Attachment-parented babies also tend to be more alert and focused.
- ✓ Attachment-parented babies are more confident.
- ✓ You become more sensitive.
- ✓ A deep attachment between you and your baby is formed.
- ✓ You have a happy baby whose needs are met and feelings are respected.

Spoiling your baby?

New parents sometimes hear advice from older generations — and child development experts — about not spoiling their children by giving them too much attention and responding immediately to their needs. Theories about child development have changed radically through the years. Not long ago, new parents were advised to ignore their babies' cries to be fed in order to create a strict feeding schedule. And recently, sleep trainers have become popular, helping new parents get their babies onto a sleep schedule as early as possible.

While these practices serve a purpose — creating predictable routines early in an infant's life — they can contribute to a sense of separation between parent and child. This is just one more reason to make a conscious choice to devote time to bonding through touch and massage.

Bringing infant massage to the Western world

The founder of the International Association of Infant Massage, Vimala McClure, discovered infant massage during her travels in India in the early 1970s. In Indian culture, the mother massages everyone in the family and passes the tradition down through her daughters. McClure found that massaging babies was a wonderful way to soothe and communicate nonverbally with them. When McClure contracted malaria, all the local women massaged and sang to her. The feeling in her body resulting from the massage stayed in her memory.

What McClure experienced in India simply didn't exist in Western culture at the time. She wrote *Infant Massage* in 1979 to remind us that love, security, and compassion are a type of wealth. She created the International Association of Infant Massage to offer opportunities for this type of touch to anyone. Infant massage instruction now takes place all over the world. We want to acknowledge and thank Vimala McClure for bringing infant massage to our attention. Her work reminded us of what we once knew but learned to forget.

In Vimala McClure's book *Infant Massage*, she writes, "As with fruit, neglect rather than attention spoils a child." You are the center of your baby's world (and she is the center of yours!). Your baby relies on you for everything: food, love, safety, nurturing. We believe that if *spoiling* refers to giving your baby lots of love and attention and responding to her needs, then by all means, you should spoil away!

Massaging Your Baby from Head to Toe

The techniques we show you in this book fit under the category of *Swedish massage*. They have been adapted to be useful for babies and toddlers.

Using Swedish massage techniques

The origins of Swedish massage can be traced to Per Henrik Ling (1776–1839), the "Father of Massage," who cured himself of rheumatism with a brand of massage that he called *medical gymnastics*. Today, a Swedish massage performed on an adult consists of specific strokes done in the following order:

1. **Effleurage.** These gliding strokes can be deep or superficial and help to warm the superficial muscles.
2. **Petrissage.** These strokes reach the deeper layers of muscle tissue by lifting the muscle.
3. **Friction.** By working with the fibers of the muscle, friction releases any scar tissue that may restrict movement.
4. **Tapotement.** These strokes include tapping or hacking the muscles and can either stimulate or sedate depending upon the rhythm and pressure used.
5. **Vibration.** This technique involves shaking or rocking the muscles to induce either a stimulating or sedating effect on the body.
6. **Joint motion.** Putting a joint through its complete range of motion helps alleviate any restrictions in movement.

With babies, you don't need to use all the strokes of Swedish massage, and you may move the order of the strokes around. Slow, rhythmic strokes are the most soothing to a baby. For a very young

Researching the benefits of touch

The Touch Research Institute (TRI), located at the University of Miami School of Medicine, was founded in 1992 by Tiffany Field, Ph.D. TRI conducts research on the effects of touch and works to apply these findings to science and medicine.

Here are some of TRI's findings:

- ✔ Newborns who are exposed to cocaine in utero gain weight faster and show less signs of stress if they are massaged.
- ✔ Fathers who massage their babies for 15 minutes daily experience more favorable interactions with their infants.
- ✔ Depressed mothers touch their babies differently than mothers who aren't depressed, which can negatively affect growth patterns in newborns. Research studies show that if depressed mothers massage their infants, the babies gain weight more quickly, have more organized sleep/wake behaviors, are less fussy, are more sociable and easily soothed, have better interaction behaviors, and have lower levels of stress hormones.
- ✔ Premature babies receive the most significant benefits from massage. These infants gain more weight, sleep better, and are discharged from the hospital sooner if they receive massage.
- ✔ Newborns exposed to HIV gain more weight if they receive massage.

infant, holding and rocking (a form of vibration) may be enough. Being present and aware of your baby's responses and needs will guide you in your choice of strokes.



Some strokes, if performed too vigorously, can be harmful to a baby; for example, you never want to use deep friction or heavy tapotement on an infant.

Any kind of contact with your infant — even just having him near your body — is the basis for beginning to massage your infant. As your baby gets older and more used to massage, he can tolerate more strokes, and you will be able to massage your baby from head to toe.

Acing Massage 101

The goal of Swedish massage is to increase the circulation of blood and lymph fluids in the body. The fluids are pushed out of the muscle tissue, back into the circulatory system, and out of the body through the elimination process.

Toxic material (in the form of lactic acid) accumulates in our bodies — specifically in our muscle tissues — as a result of poor diet, overmedication, exercise, illness, or dehydration. This toxic material results in knots, *trigger points* (tender, painful spots located on a very tight muscle), *adhesions* (areas where muscle and fascia — which we define in a moment — adhere to one another), and scar tissue. These problems cause pain, discomfort, and restriction of movement. Injury and poor posture can put muscle tissue into spasm to protect the area from further harm, causing patterns of pain.

Massage therapy works the soft tissues of the body so they can function optimally. Massage therapy is the only form of bodywork that addresses the soft tissue specifically, putting the body back into *homeostasis* (balance).

Consider this analogy: Think of the body as a sweater. If you pull one corner of the sweater, it changes the shape of the entire sweater. Massage puts the soft tissue — your sweater — back into its proper shape.



The body is lined with *fascia*, which is like a netting that holds everything in place. Keeping the integrity of the fascia is one of the main goals of massage therapy. Injury, adhesions, scar tissue, illness, disease, and spasms all pull on the fascia, resulting in stretching the sweater out of shape.

Prenatal massage

Pregnant women experience extreme changes in their bodies. Prenatal massage is a great way to alleviate some of the discomforts caused by pregnancy, such as sciatica, joint pain, fatigue, hormonal imbalances, edema, leg cramps, and constipation.

Make sure that your massage therapist has training in prenatal massage, because she needs to be aware of some things to avoid. For example, it is not safe to massage the belly during the first trimester. In addition, some points in AMMA (an Asian type of massage) can trigger a miscarriage. As long as your massage therapist is properly trained, massage during pregnancy is perfectly safe.

An added bonus of prenatal massage is being able to lie on your belly. Some massage therapists use a special type of cushion (placed on top of the massage table), which can allow you to safely lie on your belly even in the third trimester!

Your coauthor Joanne highly recommends receiving regular prenatal massages: During my recent pregnancy, I had weekly massages and found that the more I relaxed, the more relaxed my baby became. After Ava was born, I used a stroke on her belly that was similar to the stroke used on my abdomen. She loved the stroke, and I believe it was familiar to her. She melted like butter on the changing table!

Benefiting all ages: Premies to toddlers

Baby massage is a wonderful form of touch for babies of all ages. Even babies in utero can benefit from massage (see the sidebar on “Prenatal massage”).

Preparing yourself mentally



No matter how old your baby is, be genuine, present, and attentive with him. Massaging your baby without intention is, frankly, a waste of time. Intention is simple, but it requires sincerity, focus, and presence. You can establish intention by saying something like, “I am here for you my little one, to love you, to care for you, to make you feel comfort and love.” Be sure you are fully present as you say the words; infuse them with feeling and sincerity.

Most of us don’t realize how often we detach ourselves from the world. While we sit in the presence of others, we spend a lot of time drifting off or becoming distracted. This is so common it is regarded as normal. Unfortunately, our interaction with others suffers silently; our connections are compromised.

You will find this to be true when you are challenged to stay 100 percent present with your baby during massage. Breathe deeply, powerfully, and steadily, and project love toward and into your baby as you massage her. Keep your entire attention focused on your presence and interaction with your baby. This is a challenge, but it is completely within your capability. With practice, you will quickly become more aware, more regular in your breathing, and more focused.

Working with a premature baby

A study conducted by Touch Research Institute in 1986 showed that premature infants who receive some kind of touch in the hospital gain up to 47 percent more weight than those who don't. The sooner premature babies gain weight, the sooner they are able to come home.

If you have a premature baby, all you need to do to bring massage into his life is to touch him with your finger. Believe it or not, just the touch of your finger stimulates his growth and development.



Being touched increases circulation in any area on your baby's body. Increased circulation is physically stimulating, as well as encouraging to overall growth and good health. Gentle massage is a basic and loving method to help your preemie along. It is also a great way to bring physical connection into your baby's world. Watch your baby react in wonder and pleasure, and you'll know you're on the right track.

The art of baby wearing

You have probably seen other moms and dads carrying their babies around in slings. Wearing your baby in a sling offers a feeling of comfort and safety similar to what is experienced in the womb.

Let's be blunt: Being born is stressful. Labor can be difficult, everything is new, and babies have to learn how to get their needs met. Wearing your baby provides her the comfort of motion and close contact with you. It also strengthens bonding. You can begin to use a sling with your newborn right away. It's an easy and convenient way to nurture your baby while you do errands or just move about your house. (Your coauthor Joanne wrote many pages of this book wearing her baby in a sling!) Wearing your baby is also an easy way to be sure that your baby has all the touch and contact she needs as a newborn. Baby wearing can be likened to a hands-free massage!

Massaging newborns and infants

Holding, rocking, and gently stroking are usually enough to create an attachment and calm and soothe your newborn baby. If your baby is crying, remember to maintain a deep, self-nurturing, steady breathing. This prevents you from becoming stressed and overwhelmed, which makes it easier for your baby to relax.

As your baby grows older and is able to tolerate more touch and stimulation, you will be able to use the massage techniques we show you later in the book (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Even if you have just started to massage your infant, have fun, and don't be afraid to experiment!

Touching your toddler

When your baby is no longer a baby, you can add more strokes to your repertoire depending on your baby's attention and tolerance level. If you have been massaging your toddler since infancy, you will know her needs for touch very well by this point. You can increase the length and frequency of your sessions. Don't be surprised when she begins to ask you for a massage!

If you haven't been massaging your young one up to this point, it's not too late to begin. In Chapter 9, we offer all sorts of tips to help you keep your mobile 1- or 2-year-old interested long enough for you to massage her.

It's also not too late for your toddler to reap the benefits of baby massage. You can use this time to strengthen your bond, teach her how to relax, and soothe her hardworking muscles!

Healing and tending to special needs

Baby massage is a great holistic tool to use — always in conjunction with medical advice, of course — to help your baby with common ailments and different developmental needs.



Some massage techniques are effective when medicine isn't. Anyone with a colicky baby will attest to the fact that they would do anything to stop their baby from being in pain, and to stop the crying. A simple belly massage may feel good to your baby and ease the pain. Obviously, massage isn't a substitute for professional medical care, but offering massage is a conservative way to begin treating common ailments.

Offering preventative medicine

Massage is a great way of preventing your baby from becoming sick or stressed by maintaining his health. Regular massage keeps the body in *homeostasis* (balance) by increasing circulation, improving the efficiency of the elimination process, relieving stress, and improving immune function. Massage is a simple and effective way of preventing illness.

Treating physical problems

In Chapter 11, we focus on common ailments or physical problems that massage can help alleviate. Massage can be an effective treatment for the following problems common to babies:

- ✓ Slow weight gain
- ✓ Teething
- ✓ Colic
- ✓ Sleep problems
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Digestive troubles
- ✓ Chest and sinus congestion

Easing emotional stress

As we discuss in Chapter 12, massage can also help babies deal with emotional issues, such as the following:

- ✓ Attachment/bonding
- ✓ Socializing
- ✓ Relaxation

Having faith

Faith is an elusive quality. We invite you to have faith in massage as an approach to healing, as well as in your ability to administer it. Your baby can and will enjoy your loving touch, and using this opportunity to heal and help your loved one is a powerful and empowering experience.



In the United States, we tend to turn to doctors, hospitals, and the pharmaceutical industry for health and healing. But for centuries, the Asian cultures (particularly the Chinese) have relied rather successfully on holistic, hands-on healing practices. Massage is both a medical and a holistic treatment.

Unleashing endorphins

Endorphins are our bodies' natural painkillers. A release of endorphins (commonly referred to as a *runner's high*) leaves you feeling euphoric instead of fatigued, overworked, or exhausted. The deep relaxed state that massage induces triggers the release of endorphins. Keep this in mind when your baby is teething or stressed from colic. With massage, you can treat the cause of the pain and its symptoms, plus you can provide your baby with a natural, drug-free painkiller.