

## **Gentle touch: how to massage your baby**



### **Highlights**

Massage can be done anytime you and your baby are calm  
Gentle, rhythmic strokes help babies feel relaxed  
There's no one "right" way-being gentle is most important  
Watching your baby's reactions is essential  
Massage becomes easier with regular practice

### **In This Article**

Why baby massage is beneficial  
Choosing the right moment for massage  
Setting up a soothing massage environment  
Step-by-step guide to baby massage  
Important safety reminders  
Tools and Assistance

### **Why baby massage is beneficial**

Most babies enjoy gentle massage and respond well to calm touch. There's no need to follow strict steps-what matters most is being present and responsive.

Massage can:

- Deepen your bond with your baby
- Help your baby relax before sleep
- Ease tummy pain and fussiness
- Create emotional trust and security
- Offer partners a chance to connect meaningfully
- Be a calming activity beyond feeding and diapering

### **Choosing the right moment for massage**

Massage doesn't require a fixed schedule. Many families enjoy it before bath time, but it can happen whenever you and your baby are calm and not rushed. For best results:

- Make sure the room is cozy and warm
- Let your baby guide the length and focus-short sessions are often ideal
- Some babies prefer touch in specific areas rather than full-body massage

### **Setting up a soothing massage environment**

A peaceful setup helps both you and your baby feel relaxed. Prepare by:

- Choosing a quiet, warm place in your home
- Using a stable, soft surface like a bed or towel on the floor
- Picking baby-safe oil-edible, unscented oils such as olive or coconut are great choices
- Avoiding perfumed products, which may irritate baby skin
- Taking a few deep breaths so you're calm-your baby senses your mood

### **Step-by-step guide to baby massage**

Start by gently talking to your baby and asking if it's okay to begin-it encourages a sense of connection and respect.

- Undress your baby, keeping on the diaper
- Speak softly while you massage, describing your movements
- Begin with the feet and move upward

Massage each foot, ankle, and leg with long, slow strokes  
Use circular motions on the tummy and chest  
Gently move the baby's legs like pedaling a bike  
Stroke arms, hands, and each finger  
Finish with light touches to the face, ears, and head  
Turn baby on their tummy for gentle back and leg strokes

### **Important safety reminders**

To keep massage safe and comfortable:

Never leave your baby alone on high surfaces  
Avoid applying oils near the eyes, mouth, or hands  
Test a small amount of oil on your baby's skin the first time  
Don't use nut oils unless you're certain there are no allergies  
Skip mustard oil-it can cause discomfort or irritation

### **Tools and Assistance**

Use soft towels and calm lighting to create a cozy space  
Choose edible, fragrance-free oils for sensitive baby skin  
Follow your baby's cues-stop if they seem overstimulated or restless  
Turn massage into a regular part of your evening or bedtime routine  
Talk with a child health nurse or doctor if you're unsure about products or technique