

INFANT MASSAGE IN THE NICU

Massage is a very powerful tool in the NICU. There are so many benefits for your baby, including calming him/her, allowing him/her to learn how to be touched in a positive way, improves weight gain, improves feeding cues, improves muscle tone and relaxation. It also gives you a chance to bond with your baby and to get to know him or her.

1. Make sure your baby is calm, the diaper has been changed, your baby is undressed, and s/he hasn't recently eaten.
2. Place your baby on your lap or in the crib on her tummy.
3. Roll down the diaper a bit.
4. Use the organic fragrance-free oil at your baby's bedside.
5. Back massage: Place your right hand on the nape of his/her neck and the left hand on her bottom. Slowly and gently stroke down his/her back until your right hand meets the left. Move your left hand up to the nape of the neck. Repeat until you see signs that your baby's back muscles have relaxed.
6. Turning: Gently turn your baby on his/her side using the following technique: Put one of your hands on your baby's chest, keeping your baby's hands together under your hand. Use the other hand at your baby's back.
7. Swaddle or provide contain your baby's legs.
8. Arm massage: Encircle your baby's shoulder with your thumb under his/her armpit and your fingers surrounding the rest of the shoulder. Your other hand holds the baby's hand. Slowly and gently move your hand down the arm, bringing the arm across his/her chest as you do so. When you reach the hand you can massage the hand using small circles. Repeat with the same hand each time. Repeat until you see signs that your baby's arm has relaxed.
9. Swaddle or contain your baby's arms.
10. Leg massage: Undo the side of the diaper. Encircle your baby's hip with your thumb in his/her groin and your fingers surrounding the hip and buttocks. Your other hand holds the baby's foot. Slowly and gently move your hand down the leg, bringing the leg straight as you do so. When you reach the foot you can massage it using small circles. Repeat with the same hand each time. Repeat until you see signs that your baby's arm has relaxed.
11. Turn your baby to the other side and repeat the arm and leg on that side.