

INFANT MASSAGE

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Infant massage is a wonderful way to connect with your premature infant. Studies have shown that massaging a premature infant can promote weight gain, better sleeping patterns, enhance developmental skills, and it may even strengthen the immune system. Parents can benefit too by learning a special way to communicate with their infant, feeling confident in caring for their baby, and infant massage often gives you the ability to understand your preemie's cues.

Before deciding to do infant massage on your preemie, there are certain points you should consider. The present research has only been done on the stable "growing" preemie. Your NICU may encourage you to do infant massage before your preemie is stable; however, you and a nurse should always monitor your baby for any signs of stress during massage. Stress signs might be agitation, changes in heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, or oxygen levels, and/or color changes. Taking a class in infant massage is the best way to learn the proper techniques; however, there are books and videos that are available in most bookstores or on-line. Using the wrong technique while messaging your infant can be detrimental to your baby. It's always important to be supportive and calm in your movements when handling your preemie.

Remember touch builds a foundation for your infant's communication with the world. It's the beginning of the nurturing feeling your baby needs and wants from life. Learning and practicing infant massage in the NICU can lay the foundation for a wonderful daily experience for you and your baby throughout his first months or even years.