

# Getting to know your baby through positive touch and interaction



*This session is an introduction into positive touch, which can be also be referred to as infant massage. This can be a way parents and carers interact with their baby and can become a special time together. Positive touch is a tool through which parents can learn more about their baby.*



*Touch for babies is a way of communication for parent and child and they can feel comforted by the skin to skin contact and the gentle touch of a parent. Sometimes, something as simple as placing your hand on baby's tummy, gentle stroking and looking into their eyes or holding their hands or feet, may be all that is needed at that moment.*

Some babies may be in a distressed state and so lengthy positive touch may not help them and will be too much at that time.

But...

They may need gentle soothing to settle them. This could be just gently holding them or gently stroking their head or hands.

Each baby is different and as your relationship with your baby develops you will learn together what helps to soothe and calm your baby.



## Reading the Cues of Early Communication

### Positive

- Open eyed
- Arched eyebrows
- Smiling
- Active
- Alert
- Responsive
- Limbs moving
- Laughing / Cooing

### Negative

- Frowning
- Yawning
- Hiccupping
- Crying
- Hands up
- Turning away

## Is your baby ready for this special time?

Some babies may be ready for a more lengthy period of Positive Touch and baby should be showing signs that they are ready for this interaction, we also call these signs 'cues'. Some of these could be:

- Smiling and calm
- Eyes wide and bright
- Pursing lips into an 'ooh' shape
- Looking at your face and showing interest
- Reaching for you
- Turning head towards you
- Relaxed arm and leg movements

## **Sometimes your baby may not be ready for this special time and some of these signs could be:**

- Crying
- Fussing and struggling
- Rubbing eyes/ears
- Hungry or restless
- Tired or sleeping
- Unwell or with a temperature
- After immunisations
- If they have broken or inflamed skin
- If they've just had a feed

## It may be time to stop...

During this special time sometimes your baby may be ready to stop sooner than you are and they may need a break. Some signs they may want to stop could be:

- Becoming restless
- Arching their back
- Looking away/turning head away or staring into space
- Closing eyes
- Skin colour changing
- Increased foot, arm and leg movements
- Holding fists tightly
- Pulling away
- Bringing back a little milk
- Yawning
- Crawling/rolling away
- Falling asleep

## Oils and Emollients

Some people find that oil can help with your hands moving on your baby's skin.

If you feel you want to use oil or emollient, it is important that you find the right one for you and your baby and you may need to test it on your baby's skin first to check there are no adverse reactions.

It is advisable to avoid strongly scented oils as this can upset your baby. Also, aromatherapy oils are very concentrated and should only be used under expert guidance and advice.

If you are unsure what to use you should seek further advice.



## Finding the right time and space

- Before starting this special time do you feel relaxed and comfortable? Have you got the time or are there lots of distractions for you? Is your baby showing the positive cues? These are amongst some of the things to consider before starting.
- Finding the right environment is really important as this will help you and your baby relax. You will need a warm, relaxing space that you feel comfortable in. It may help to have the lights low and if you have some nice gentle music this might help you and baby to feel calm. A soft place to lay your baby on or a changing mat or fluffy towel and remember to switch off your phone!
- If you have any jewellery that may rub the baby's skin then you may want to remove this and keep it safe.

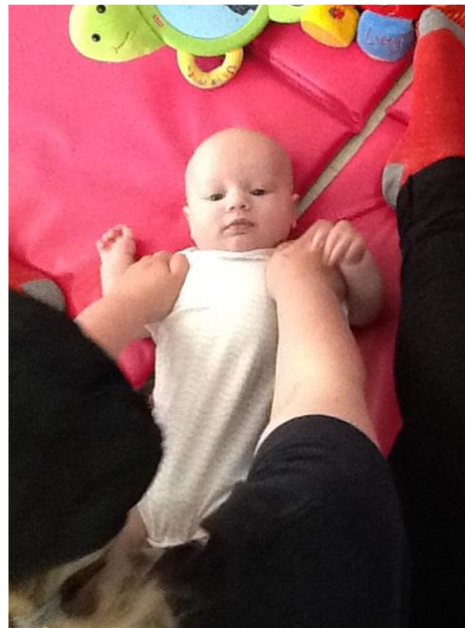
## Asking Permission

- It is important to ask your baby's permission so that the baby feels they are being heard and their feelings are respected.
- Holding your baby close and looking in their eyes, or placing your hands on their chest whilst they are lying down
- Speaking in a soft, gentle tone, using your baby's name, ask them "shall we have some special time?"



## Opening Stroke

- A gentle introduction for your special time together
- This prepares your baby's body that the positive touch is about to start
- You do not have to undress your baby to complete this stroke as some baby's feel more contained when clothed
- Place flat, open hands on the top of your baby's head or tummy
- Gently stroke down both sides of the body from the head to the feet



## Tummy strokes

- This can help to relieve symptoms of constipation, colic, trapped wind and can relax the stomach area
- This must always be completed in a clockwise motion!
- Draw a wide circle around your baby's tummy button with the flat of your hand
- You can repeat this move three to four times



## After your special time...

- When your special time has come to a close there are a few important things to remember..
- Always remove the oil, if used, from your baby's skin
- If the weather is warm do not lay your baby in the sun with any oils on their skin
- Your baby may want a drink or feed as there has been lots of stimulation and this can increase their thirst
- It's nice to wrap them up in a warm, fluffy towel and give them a big cuddle
- Some baby's may become sleepy so allow them time to rest

## The benefits of Positive Touch for your baby can be...

- It can help your baby sleep better as it can help them to relax
- It can help you to understand your baby's cues
- It can help to relieve the symptoms of colic and constipation as it relaxes the stomach area
- It can be a special time for you and your baby which can help strengthen your relationship

## The benefits for you as a parent can be...

- It can be a special time for you and your baby and can strengthen your relationship
- Learning your baby's cues can give you a greater understanding of your baby
- Gives you a reason to stop and spend one-to-one time with your baby
- If you are experiencing difficulties with your baby it can be a positive interaction for you both



## References and for further information

**The Guild of Sensory Development**

<http://www.gofsd.org.uk/about-sensory-development/baby-massage>

**Peter Walker Baby Massage Teacher**

<http://www.babymassageteachertraining.com/>

**The Brazelton Institute**

<http://www.brazelton.co.uk/>

**Touch Learn Infant Massage Teachers**

<http://www.touchlearn.co.uk/>

**The International Association of Infant Massage**

<http://www.iaim.org.uk/>

If you need further advice or support with any issues that arise around positive touch or interactions with your baby, please contact your Health Visiting Team

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