

# Handy guide

## Getting to know your baby Positive touch and interaction

For parents, carers, health visitors, public health nurses  
and community nursery nurses

**Produced by CNN Alison Russell**

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## Positive touch

**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, however 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.

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## Positive touch (continued)

### **Positive Touch** The benefits for baby

- 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

### **Positive Touch** The benefits for parents

- 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

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## Reading the cues

### 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?

- 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.

### If your baby is not ready

- 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

## Time to stop?

- 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

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## Oils and emollients

**Some people find that oils or emollients can help with your hands moving on your baby's skin.**

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

Avoid strongly scented oils as this can upset your baby. Aromatherapy oils are very concentrated and should only be used under expert guidance and advice. It is important to remember that some oils and emollients can carry a fire risk so avoid using around naked flames.

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

## Finding the right time and space

### Before starting, consider the following:

- **Finding the right environment** is really important. 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
- You may want to remove any jewellery that may rub the baby's skin

### Opening stroke

You can let your baby know that the positive touch is about to start by placing your flat, open hands on the top of your baby's head or tummy and gently stroking down both sides of the body from the head to the feet. You do not have to undress your baby to complete this stroke as some baby's feel more contained when clothed.

## Finding the right time and space (continued)

### Tummy strokes

Tummy strokes 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

### Following positive touch

- 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 babies may become sleepy so allow them time to rest

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## References and other resources



Peter Walker Baby Massage Teacher  
[www.babymassageteachertraining.com](http://www.babymassageteachertraining.com)



Touch Learn Infant Massage Teachers  
[www.touchlearn.co.uk](http://www.touchlearn.co.uk)



For further advice or support with any issues that arise around positive touch or interactions with your baby, please contact your Health Visiting Team:  
[www.ghc.nhs.uk/our teams and services/health visiting](http://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our_teams_and_services/health_visiting)

The Brazelton Institute  
[www.brazelton.co.uk](http://www.brazelton.co.uk)



The International Association  
of Infant Massage  
[www.iaim.org.uk](http://www.iaim.org.uk)



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