

“How massage & relaxation techniques will assist your colicky baby”

Are you looking for a natural, gentle way to help your colicky, constipated or windy baby? Now there is a specific massage routine for parents and caregivers that will ease symptoms and provide gentle but effective relief for baby. Learning the routine helps to empower parents and caregivers as well as improve confidence and understanding of their baby's body language (cues).

The **Colic Massage Routine** is an easy to follow routine that research shows will provide stimulation of the digestive system (through pressure and stroking) and relief of abdominal wind, gastrointestinal (digestive) cramping, constipation and also helps to assist elimination. This particular routine also releases built-up stress by calming and relaxing your baby and relaxing the stomach muscles.

It is *extremely important* to always massage your baby's tummy in a clockwise direction (refer to picture 1). This is to support the flow of the gastrointestinal system. When pockets of air are trapped in the gastrointestinal system this causes excruciating pain for your baby; this is physically what your baby is experiencing in a colicky episode.



Picture 1 (from the I.A.I.M. Colic Relief Routine guide).

What to look out for: Symptoms of Colic

It is frustrating to think that doctors and health professionals do not know the single cause of colic. Quite often you will hear “don't worry; they will grow out of it.” I know I did when my first born was about 5 weeks old. That was nearly 10 years ago now but I still remember to this day the constant crying and feeling of helplessness. Little did I know the healing power of touch was in my hands!

Colic and Massage For Your Baby - notes

Typical **symptoms** infants with colic have experienced include:

- tense legs
- firm, swollen abdomen
- pulling of knees into stomach
- a painful cry lasting for extended periods (sometimes hours)
- difficulty tolerating stimulation
- arching of back and neck

As a parent or caregiver, some things to ask yourself include:

- Does the crying occur in a predictable pattern eg the same time each day?
- When does your baby cry? Look for symptoms relating to diet, over-stimulation, intolerance to certain foods / cows milk / lactose.
- Are there any patterns emerging?

Given the immaturity of the digestive system in most newborns, studies suggest this may contribute to a large portion of colicky babies. Massage is ideal for stimulating the digestive system and for helping it to function properly.

How can massage assist a windy or colicky baby?

Learning the **Colic Relief Routine** involves a series of massage strokes, touch relaxation and resting hand techniques to stimulate the digestive process, relax your baby and provide relief from symptoms. Applying nurturing touch releases relaxing hormones and reduces stress hormones such as cortisol in your baby. There are many studies done to support this, the main source worldwide comes from The Touch Research Institute, Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

It is recommend (I.A.I.M.) that once you have learnt the routine, to perform the **routine 2 to 3 times a day, for five to ten minutes each time (if baby will allow!) for at least 2 weeks**. Be consistent and following through with the routine on a daily basis is the key to ensuring relief for your baby as well as a useful preventative measure.

Massaging your baby when they are experiencing a 'colicky episode' is the only time the I.A.I.M (International Assoc of Infant Massage) recommends massage when your baby is crying and in pain. If your baby is experiencing a great deal of wind and pain or colic, it is recommended you focus solely on the colic massage routine and / or performing the stomach massage strokes and leave massaging the rest of their body for when they are happy and content.

It is important that you take some deep breaths to help you relax before you perform the colic massage routine on your baby otherwise your baby may pick up on your stress

Colic and Massage For Your Baby - notes

and tension. Baby's have an amazing sixth sense; they will feel the tension in your body as they are being held and may become more stressed, upset and anxious.

Resting hands – otherwise known as 'still touch', this is a lovely way to indicate to your baby that you are about to massage their tummy. If you want to talk to your baby whilst you are massaging their tummy it is important to be aware of your tone of voice; a soft relaxed voice, relaxed shoulders and body language really does help! Place your hands with palms together on the abdominal area. You may also place your hands on their legs; this is the least intrusive way to begin massage on the legs.

Touch relaxation – the 'colic massage routine' mentions 'touch relaxation'; this is a technique to help your baby to consciously relax their muscles, particularly their legs and arms. Cup both hands around your baby's leg, gently bouncing or swaying their leg up and down whilst saying to your baby 'relax, relax, relax'. The touch relaxation technique is important for babies to learn; as adults, we know how to consciously relax our legs and arms, however babies do not yet have conscious control of their muscles, due to their brains still immature at birth (voluntary control over muscles, in particular, newborn reflexes, usually occurs by one year of age). This is a learnt response, a form of habituation; the more you repeat this technique helps your baby build strong connections within their brain, assisting them to relax their muscles. Sometimes you may find it is difficult for your baby to relax or straighten their legs, especially as the colic routine requires you to bring their knees and legs up to towards their tummy. TIP: If you experience this with your baby, try the 'touch relaxation' first.

If you have any further questions or would like to participate in a colic massage workshop or infant massage I.A.I.M. course, please:

Phone Natalie 0411 615 641

Email natalie@idibidikids.com.au

Visit www.idibidikids.com.au

Natalie Garmson,
Cert. Infant Massage Instructor, Assoc. Dip Sc,
Owner of Idibidi Kids & State Rep. IAIM, Perth, West Australia