

After

- Leaflet 8** 1. Use the **moving** and **holding/carrying methods** you used at the beginning to put your baby back into his crib.
- Leaflet 7** 2. Take the time to tell your baby that the massage is over (if tolerated, of course).
- Leaflet 6** 3. Be sure to apply the **soothing methods** for the next few minutes to allow him/her time to reorganize and fall asleep slowly.
- 4. Remove your hands **gradually** so that your baby still feels your touch as he/she relaxes and falls asleep.

A set of 11 leaflets

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PARENTING IN THE NEONATAL UNIT

Massage

Leaflet **10**



Massage is a great way to establish special contact with your baby. In addition to being a source of comfort and relief, massage helps your baby to feel the different parts of his/her body.

Massage also makes it possible to gently reconnect with the most stressed areas of his/her body (feet & face). It is usually offered to premature babies over 32 weeks and weighing more than 1,200 grams.

Check the protocols or guidelines with the nursing staff in your neonatal unit.

Massage steps

Before

1. Have the following items at hand:
 - **Blankets**, in case your baby gets cold during or at the end of the massage (warm blankets can also be used);
 - **Pacifier** (to help your baby feel secure);
 - **Massage oil**. Ideally, use a massage oil that is odourless, mild, non-irritating and certified organic. No nut or petroleum-based product should be used. Some neonatal units allow the use of certain lotions. Check with the staff at your neonatal unit for more information.
2. Remember **to tell your baby** that you are about to undress him/her for a massage to prepare him/her for your contact. This is very reassuring.
3. Completely undress your baby. With the help of the nurse, remove wires from devices and monitors. Try to promote the foetal tucked-in position as much as possible (arms and legs bent, hands close to the mouth, head in line with the body) during this step and use the **moving methods**. If your baby shows signs of stress, allow time to take a break (**soothing method**). The more immature and sick your baby is, the slower your movements should be.
4. Place your baby on his/her stomach using the **moving methods**. The back position is too destabilizing for the premature baby. It is therefore best to place your baby on his/her stomach or side during the massage, to improve the feeling of safety and maintain a foetal tucked-in position.

Leaflet 8

Leaflet 6

Massage

During

- Pay attention to signs of stress throughout the massage and feel free to apply **soothing methods**. Here is how to proceed for the massage:
 - Warm the massage oil in your hands.
 - Begin the massage by placing your hands on your baby's back to envelop him/her. Observe his/her reaction. Your whole hands (palms and fingers) should remain still and cover as much surface as possible. Place one hand on the upper back and slowly descend towards the buttocks. The second hand then takes over at the level of the upper back. So, in turn, each of your hands is in contact with your baby's body.
- Rely on your baby's reactions to adjust your speed and determine if you can switch to another part of his/her body.
- Moderate pressure is preferable. It is necessary to avoid tickling, light caressing or scratching, which may overstimulate your baby. You will know that the pressure is good if the skin changes colour slightly after the passing of your hand.
- The principle is always the same, whether you massage an arm or a leg: a hand starts from the top of the limb and goes downwards; the other takes over when the first hand is lifted.
- If your baby is responding well, you can add other stimulation, such as talking to him (auditory stimulation), looking at him (visual stimulation), or rocking him/her gently (vestibular stimulation).
- At the end of the massage, you can place your hands on his/her body again and keep them still, for a few moments. Over time, your baby will understand that this means that the massage is finished.

Leaflet 6