All babies have, due to their physiological immaturity at birth, a great need for touch.

Without touch an infant will die.

**TOUCH**
- first sensory input in life comes while still in the womb
- primary means of learning about the world
- critical for children’s growth, development, health, mental well-being

**What is Infant Massage?**
- an ancient tradition
- a way of communicating
- a way to foster mutual trust & understanding

**Benefits of Infant Massage**
- Massage of healthy babies by parents, especially mothers, greatly enhances the bond between parent(s) and child (Underdown et al., 2006; Serrano et al., 2010).
- Massage improves the psychological state, mental and physical development of the child.
- Massage greatly helps mother to reduce stress and anxiety especially after labor (Livingston et al., 2007).
Bonding
- Ongoing process requiring nurturing & time
- Never too late to enhance & promote

Attachment
- Attachment is an inborn system in the brain that evolves in ways that influence and organize motivational, emotional and memory processes
- Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person’s life revolves throughout life and into old age

Importance of Bonding & Attachment
Psychological Importance/Benefits for Baby:
- learns to trust and will trust more
- feels more competent/has more self worth
- learns healthy independence
- learns intimacy
- learns to give and receive love
- feels secure and safe

Physical Importance/Benefits for Baby:
- has healthy development of the nervous system and brain
- is better organized
- learns language easier
- physically grows better
- is more receptive to tactile stimulation
- is able to self regulate, emotions, self-soothe
**Sensory Integration**

neural organization of the senses of sight, hearing, touch and balance.

**TOUCH** is part of this process

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**Sensory Integration**

- ability of the brain to organize these impulses varies from child to child
- automatically done in most children and therefore the ability is taken for granted
- not all children’s brains manage to localize and sort sensory impulses correctly

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**Sensory Integration**

- dysfunction may lead to learning disabilities, even though the child has normal IQ
- Behavioral disturbances may also occur in some children, despite good parents and a healthy social environment

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**Integration of Senses**

- First Level
  - Integrates balance
- Second Level
  - Tactile senses are interpreted and correctly organized in the brain

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**Integration of Senses**

- Third Level
  - The prerequisites for learning to speak and understand language should be formed
- Fourth Level
  - The eye and hand specialize
Infant/Toddler Development

- Through relationships infants and toddlers learn what people expect of them, and what they can expect of other people.

- Nurturing, protective, stable and consistent relationships are essential to young children’s mental health and development.

“Keeping the Connection”, nurturing touch is beneficial for open and healthy communication between caregivers and children.

Massage can be a forum for awareness of children’s physical, psychological well being, social status, and spiritual development, to really “know” their child.

Caregiver & Child Connection:

- Touch can continue to keep the connection between parent and child.
- Establishes a family tradition
- Mutual time for parent and child to “talk”

What does Research Tell Us?

A developing sense of oneself as competent to engage in relationships and to act in the world is an Important aspect of infant mental health.
Research

Research studies have shown many positive effects of touch therapy, including:

- Facilitates weight gain in preterm infants
- Reduces stress hormones
- Aids in length of sleep and decreased latency
- Alleviates depressive symptoms (for parent)
- Reduces pain
- Improves immune function

Does Massage Make Babies Smarter?

According to Dr. Tiffany Field, PhD, studies show that a five-minute massage enhances the performance of babies & children on tasks that require attentiveness.

When, Where & How

When to Massage

- Nurturing touch can be started as soon as caregiver and child become acquainted with each other.
- It is best not to force the start but begin when the time feels right.
- It is common to start infant massage when the baby is about 3 weeks to one month old.

Where

- A warm room
- Quiet and calm atmosphere
Remember that it is not the massage technique that is most important but rather that the giver of the massage is touching the child with warm, loving hands and with a total presence.

How often Massage can be done
- in principal a child may be massaged everyday.
- once the caregiver is aware of the child’s preference, they’ll know when to shorten the session or when to rest for a day.
- it is essential to remember massage is done with a child, not to a child.

Massage Adaptations | Ages & Stages

Active Crawler:
- beneficial to have a variety of familiar objects to keep baby busy during the massage
- important to expect them not to be still
- child may need to be positioned so he/she can see what is going on around them
- make massage playful and fun
- adapt the strokes to meet the child’s size and position

Massage Adaptations | Ages & Stages

Toddler:
- child may be quite active
- massage at naptime, bedtime, after bath or to soothe child
- limit number of strokes, due to shortened attention span
- play, sing songs and rhymes, tell stories and other quiet activities
- wonderful imagination can be encouraged by introducing fun massage techniques

Massage Adaptations | Ages & Stages

Pre-School Age:
- child’s growing limbs may need to be supported
- strokes may need to be done in sections
- child may be experiencing growing pains, slow relaxing strokes may ease this discomfort
- child is becoming more independent and selective of how and when he/she wants a massage
Training in Infant Massage

Certified Infant Massage Teacher

- Training offered by Liddle Kidz Foundation
- CIMTs may teach parents/caregivers how to massage their infants
- Massage Therapists, nurses and other healthcare staff who wish to teach parents/caregivers, or practice infant massage, should become certified

To become a CIMT®

- Attend a Liddle Kidz Foundation Certified Infant Massage Teacher Training
- Complete recommended reading before the training.
- PRACTICUM: Teach Infant Massage classes with parents and obtain written participant evaluations.
- When the certification process is complete, the student will obtain certification as a Certified Infant Massage Teacher (CIMT®).

Course Schedule

www.LiddleKidz.com

Video Channel:

www.youtube.com/LiddleKidz

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References

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