**Documented Benefits**

**Improved Sleep Patterns**

Infants experience improved sleep immediately after being massaged.1

Infant who were massaged before bedtime adjusted to a more favorable rest-activity cycle by the age of 8 weeks and produced more melatonin, a sleep regulator, during the night by the age of 12 weeks.2

Infants and toddlers with sleep onset problems were given daily massages by their parents for 15 minutes prior to bedtime for one month. The massaged babies showed fewer sleep delay behaviors and had a shorter latency to sleep onset by the end of the study. During the day, babies were more awake, alert and active.3

**Reduction of Stress**

Cortisol levels, a stress indicator, was significantly lower after infant massage of infants born prematurely.4

Massaged pre-term infants showed fewer stress behaviors and less activity during a five-day study.5

**Enhanced Motor Development**

Premature infants who were massaged regularly experienced enhanced motor development and improved Brazelton neonatal behavioral assessment scores.6

Massage of premature infants successfully modulated infant state.7

Infants born of HIV+ mothers who were massaged three times daily had significantly more optimal scores on the Brazelton neonatal behavioral assessment, including habituation, motor, range of state, autonomic stability, excitability, and stress behaviors.8

**Improved Interaction in Family**

Fathers who used massage techniques with their infants experienced increased self-esteem as parents. The babies greeted their fathers with more eye contact, smiling, vocalizing and reaching responses. The fathers were more expressive and showed more enjoyment and warmth during interactions with their infants.9

Interventions to support early relationships: mechanisms identified within infant massage programs.10

**Help for Depressed Babies and Mothers**

Massaged babies of depressed, adolescent mothers gained more weight, had improved sociability and sooth-ability temperament scores, and experienced greater decreases in urinary stress hormones. They cried less and had lower stress levels.11

Learning the practice of infant massage by mothers may be an effective treatment for facilitating mother-infant interaction in mothers with postnatal depression. Edinburgh Postnatal Depression scores improved for the mothers who learned massage, as did their video-taped mother-baby interactions.12

Infants of depressed mothers who experienced massage therapy (compared to infants who were rocked) spent more time in active alert and active awake states, cried less, and had lower salivary cortisol levels, suggesting lower stress. The massage-therapy infants gained more weight, showed greater improvement on emotionality, sociability, and soothability temperament dimensions, and had greater decrease in urinary stress catecholamines/hormones (norepinephrine, epinephrine, and cortisol).13

**Increased Weight Gain for Premature Infants**

Premature infants that were massaged regularly had higher daily weight gain, increased motor activity, and better Brazelton neonatal behavioral assessment scores. They had a better conversion of calories to weight gain.14, 15

**Helpful for Cocaine-Exposed Babies**

Massaged cocaine-exposed infants averaged a 28% greater weight gain over a 10 day period, had fewer stress behaviors, improved orientation behaviors and better motor scores.16

Cocaine exposed newborns had fewer postnatal complications and showed increased weight gain, and better performance on the Brazelton Neonatal Behavior Assessment Scale (particularly on the motor scale), and less stress behaviors following 10 days of massage.17

**Improved immunity**

Babies in control group who were not massaged in two orphanages in Ecuador had a 50% greater chance of having diarrhea and an 11% greater likelihood of experiencing illnesses of any kind.18

HIV-positive adolescents who received twice- weekly massage experienced decreased depression and an improvement in immune system function, including increased natural killer cell numbers.19

Massage therapy helped preserve the immune systems of HIV-positive children who did not have access to antiretroviral medication.20

**Safe for Medically Fragile Infants**

A parent-trained touch massage protocol for medically fragile infants in a level III neonatal intensive care unit was both feasible and safe. Babies remained physiologically stable and had no change in agitation/pain scores.21

A greater increase in temperature was noted for pre-term infants receiving massage therapy even though incubator portholes remained open during the massage.22

Preterm infants receiving massage therapy showed fewer stress behaviors and less activity.23

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