



Nurturing Beginnings

*Information on Infant Massage USA
& Nurturing Touch in Medical
Facilities & the NICU*

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A MESSAGE FROM INFANT MASSAGE USA

Our mission is to promote nurturing touch and communication through training, education and research.

With that in mind, we work to **empower parents** and **promote nurturing** through parent-baby communication and responsiveness in addition to infant massage education.

Through our work we have seen the benefits of including infant massage education in early intervention and parent education programs.

We hope to share with you our vision to honor early relationships and family-level interactions through infant massage education, nurturing touch and communication.

As you read through the information in this document, please consider -

- Having your staff attend our Certified Educator of Infant Massage (CEIM) training,
- Bringing in a CEIM from your community to discuss infant massage or work with your organization,
- Partnering with Infant Massage USA
- Or simply learning more about the power of nurturing touch.

CHARISS T.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

In partnership with the International Association of Infant Massage, **our mission is to promote nurturing touch and communication through training, education, and research so that parents, caregivers and children are loved, valued, and respected** throughout the United States and the world community.

As the US Chapter of the International Association of Infant Massage, we have been helping parents and professionals offer nurturing touch and empower families with this incredible tool since 2005.

TRAINING

IMUSA works with 12 International Trainers to provide 60+ Certified Educator of Infant Massage (CEIM) Training Classes each year across the US. Our Trainers provide comprehensive, evidence-informed four-day courses across the country that equip the participants (our Educators) to hold individual and group classes in their communities to teach parents / caregivers and their infants.

EDUCATION

Our Certified Educators provide individual and group classes throughout the US. These classes support communities by improving the physical and emotional well-being of babies, enhancing parent-infant bonding, and facilitating long-term, positive emotional development in families. We also provide education and resources to professionals, students and Certified Educators.

RESEARCH

We focus on bringing awareness to infant massage related research. We work to support nurturing touch research and our Board contains a committee that works to highlight current research and identify new research opportunities.

OUR PROGRAMS

20K

Based on our Students working with 5 families to obtain certification, Infant Massage USA has reached over 20,000 families since 2005, and we estimate the number is much higher since our Educators continue their work after completing the certification requirements.

100%

100% of our Students Agree or Strongly Agree that the knowledge gained in Infant Massage USA's training can be used in their future practice.

12

Infant Massage USA is the most widely recognized infant massage continuing education provider in the United States. We partner with 12 Continuing Education agencies to provide CEUs for Nurses, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers and more.

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Our 3 restricted funds are dedicated to providing scholarships to our CEIMs to help parents / caregivers access classes, scholarships to provide free tuition to CEIMs affiliated with our partners and a Humanitarian fund to support projects and needs associated with emergency or crisis situations, underserved populations or similar social issues.

BENEFITS OF INFANT MASSAGE

Below we look at a few of the most commonly referenced benefits of infant massage along with how our program supports them.

SUPPORTING INFANT / CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Infants who experience regular massage often see reduced stress, nervous system improvements and improved self-regulation and body-awareness.

Our classes teach parents/caregivers how to incorporate nurturing touch safely into their lives and with the individualized attention their baby deserves.

SUPPORTING BONDING & ATTACHMENT

Research supports that infant massage and infant massage parent education programs can increase parent confidence and attachment, result in greater success in adapting to and developing strategies to cope with parenthood and can benefit mothers with postpartum depression by helping them to relate to their baby and inducing the release of oxytocin.

Our classes are cue-based and baby-driven. Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to respond to the individual needs of their babies.

REDUCING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

The CDC identifies nurturing parenting skills as one of the most important protective factors for lessening child abuse and neglect, with approaches that enhance parent skills and promote healthy child development having a demonstrated effect on prevention.

Our classes ensure parents/caregivers are educated on nurturing touch, bonding techniques, communication and behavioral states as well as broader developmental benefits.

IMPROVING SLEEP QUALITY

Bedtime routines, especially those including infant massage, have shown to improve multiple aspects of the sleep cycle for both the child and the parent/caregiver.

In our classes, parents/caregivers learn quiet activities (massage, nurturing touch, lullabies etc.) and spend time recognizing their child's ways of communicating, which are ideal for bedtime routines and can make nights less stressful for everyone.

*Learn more at
www.infantmassageusa.org/research*

RESEARCH ON INFANT MASSAGE INTERVENTIONS

Infant massage programs may assist in decreasing parental perceived stress levels in new parents

KuBeyer K, Strauss L. Infant massage programs may assist in decreasing parental perceived stress levels in new parents. Occup Ther Health Care. 2003

"A sample of four new parents demonstrated decreased perceived stress levels following involvement in a month long infant massage program, indicating an enhanced perception of their individual parenting abilities.

The results of the study indicate that infant massage training is an effective tool to be used in assisting parents/caregivers in the acquisition of the parenting role and the development of role related skills."

Effects of Infant Massage on Aspects of the Parent-Child Relationship

Jump, Vonda K., "Effects of Infant Massage on Aspects of the Parent-Child Relationship: An Experimental Manipulation" (1998). All Graduate Theses and Dissertations.

"Comparisons indicated that mothers who massaged their 12-month-old infants more than one time per week had infants who were statistically significantly more securely attached than infants of mothers who massaged their infants less than once per week, and were more securely attached than infants in the control group."

**This research was completed by one of Infant Massage USA's International Trainers, Vonda Jump.*

Infant massage improves mother-infant interaction for mothers with postnatal depression

Onozawa K, Glover V, Adams D, Modi N, Kumar RC. Infant massage improves mother-infant interaction for mothers with postnatal depression. J Affect Disord. 2001

"The aims of this study were to determine whether attending regular massage classes could reduce maternal depression and also improve the quality of mother-infant interaction.

This study suggests that learning the practice of infant massage by mothers is an effective treatment for facilitating mother-infant interaction in mothers with postnatal depression."

Benefits of Infant Massage for Infants and Parents in the NICU

Pados, Britt & McGlothen-Bell, Kelly. (2019). Benefits of Infant Massage for Infants and Parents in the NICU. Nursing for Women's Health. 23.

"There is evidence that infant massage has beneficial effects on preterm infants in the NICU, including shorter length of stay; reduced pain; and improved weight gain, feeding tolerance, and neurodevelopment. Parents who performed massage with their infants in the NICU reported experiencing less stress, anxiety, and depression.

Neonatal nurses can obtain education and certification in infant massage and can teach parents infant massage techniques, thereby promoting the health and well-being of parent-infant dyads."

NURTURING TOUCH & NAS

Roughly every 15 minutes a baby is born suffering from opioid withdrawal. (1)

Babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) often show signs such as -

- Body shakes (tremors), seizures (convulsions), overactive reflexes (twitching) and tight muscle tone
- Fussiness, excessive crying or having a high-pitched cry
- Poor feeding or sucking or slow weight gain
- Breathing problems, including breathing really fast
- Fever, sweating or blotchy skin
- Trouble sleeping and lots of yawning
- Diarrhea or throwing up
- Stuffy nose or sneezing

NAS may also cause long term issues such as developmental delays, motor problems, behavioral or learning problems, speech and language issues, sleep problems, ear infections and vision problems. (2)

In addition to pharmacological treatments, interventions based on touch and communication have shown to make a difference in care.



One of the goals of nonpharmacologic interventions is to facilitate supportive parental behaviors and decrease external stimuli. (3)

In these instances, parents might begin to introduce nurturing touch and infant massage education through -

- Cuddling and holding
- Skin to skin contact and kangaroo care
- Gentle positive touch to the feet, face and mouth
- When tolerated, infant massage
- Slow and gentle movements when repositioning
- Recognizing and responding to cues and asking permission
- Learning to create a calm and relaxing environment

Taking these initial steps toward nurturing touch can encourage a parent's confidence to attend a full infant massage course later on and continue the opportunity for bonding and communication.

(1) DrugAbuse.gov

(2) MarchOfDimes.com

(3) Maguire, 2014

32,000

the number of babies born with NAS in 2014. A five-fold increase from 2004.

9,500

the cost of a hospital stay for a newborn with NAS was \$9,500 in 2016, compared with \$1,100 for other newborn hospital stays—a nearly 9-times increase in cost.

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the average length of stay for a newborn with NAS was 12 days in 2016, compared with 2 days for other newborn hospital stays—a 6-times increase in length of stay.

Sources: CDC.gov and DrugAbuse.gov

A CEIM'S PERSPECTIVE OF INFANT MASSAGE IN THE NICU

By Lisa Bader (OT, CEIM)

As an occupational therapist and CEIM working in a NICU (Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit), my job may be quite different from many CEIMs around the world. I wanted to share with you some insight into the world of premature infants and specifically what infant massage looks like in the NICU.

It is first important to have a basic understanding of the preemie brain. The brain of a premature infant is quite different from that of a full term infant.

In 2003, a study revealed what had been suspected for years. The MRI of 260 babies born more than 10 weeks early and weighing less than 1250 grams were compared with those of full term infants. The premature babies had 30% less gray matter (the brain's thinking cells) than full term babies and 40% less white matter (connections) (Dunn, 2003).

We also know that the brain of infants in the last trimester of pregnancy is wiring at 40,000 connections per minute! Furthermore, the infant's brain at 35 weeks weighs only two-thirds of what it will weigh at 40 weeks (Engle et al., 2007). In the third trimester, the progress in brain development depends upon experiences in the womb-or NICU in the case of premature babies (Graven, 2007).

Nurses, parents, therapists, and doctors need to understand that they are affecting the infant's brain development with each and every interaction in the NICU. It is everyone's job to create adaptive responses versus maladaptive responses in the brain. In the NICU, protection of the developing brain from environmental insults and noxious stimuli is critical.

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(cont.)

This concept, called neuroprotection, is not new to the medical world but is a fairly new idea to the NICU.

Neuroprotection encompasses all interventions that promote normal development of the brain and prevent disabilities.

Treatments such as infant massage, kangaroo care, and developmental care have PROVEN to be effective in promoting cognitive development. We begin portions of infant massage early on in the NICU, normally around 29-30 weeks estimated gestational age. Infant massage is considered a “positive touch treatment” in the NICU world.

Positive touch is important because premature infants are exposed to an array of negative sensory experiences on any given day.

A study by Carbajal et al., (2006), showed that over a 2 week period, 431 neonates experienced 30,174 painful procedures. Interestingly, 56% of heel sticks had no intervention.

Another study of 14 NICU's in Canada over a one week period showed that 46% of invasive procedures had no intervention (Johnston, 1997).

The negative sensory input these infants experience can be “buffered” by positive sensory input. Parents are taught to massage their infant's foot at least once a day. In this way, and on a neurological level, the infant learns that “every time my foot is touched, it is not a negative experience”

By simply pressing all over the foot and heel, the infant is experiencing positive sensory input, the brain is “wiring” in an adaptive versus maladaptive way, and the infant is less likely to walk on his tiptoes or refuse to wear shoes as a toddler.

We also instruct parents to initiate positive touch to the face and mouth as these infants are at a high risk of developing food aversions later on. They are taught to begin by bringing the infant's own hand to his mouth and touching around the mouth.

They are later instructed to complete the face portion of infant massage, starting with two or three of each stroke and working up to six or eight strokes of each as the infant tolerates it.

Again, all touch is slow and firm and it is imperative to watch the infant's cues. If an infant shows avoidance cues such as finger splaying, hiccups, gagging, a change in color or muscle tone, for example, the touch or massage must be stopped. The infant must be helped to decrease stress and reorganize himself.

Infant massage in its entirety is often not completed until the infant is 35-37 weeks of age depending on the difficulty of the infant's NICU course.

Parents are usually instructed on a one to one basis by the CEIM in the NICU. They complete the massage with oil following therapist instruction and handouts. In our NICU, an infant massage class is offered twice a month and parents learn about all of the benefits of infant massage and learn all the strokes on a doll. Individual session times are then scheduled once the baby can tolerate a full massage.

Infant massage is not only critical to these babies' neuromotor and cognitive development, but also their emotional development.

Parents are thrilled to be empowered very early on in the NICU stay to positively influence their baby's outcome. My job as an Occupational Therapist in the NICU has been made so much more meaningful since becoming a Certified Educator of Infant Massage.

GET INVOLVED

BECOME A CERTIFIED EDUCATOR OF INFANT MASSAGE

Certified Educators of Infant Massage (CEIMs) work to educate parents and families in private, group, hospital and agency settings.

In addition to teaching parents, CEIMs are qualified to present information about infant massage in their communities, participate in research studies, conduct in-service programs, and present at professional conferences.

Teaching infant massage education to parents and caregivers offers a rewarding opportunity to enhance parent-infant bonding, improve and maintain the physical well-being of babies, and facilitate long-term, positive emotional development in families.

Infant Massage USA's internationally recognized, comprehensive, four-day, Parent Educator Certification Training includes everything you need to get started.

Students get practical experience teaching infant massage through the parent-baby class that is part of each training, and through a practicum in your own agency or community afterwards.

Participants can join an existing scheduled training or bring a private training directly to their organization.



FIND A CERTIFIED EDUCATOR NEAR YOU

The role of the Certified Educator of Infant Massage (CEIM) is to facilitate and enhance the loving relationship between infants & parents.

Infant massage is an ideal medium, because it naturally encompasses all of the elements of the bonding process including eye to eye contact, warmth, scent, vocalizations, skin-to-skin contact, and responsiveness.

Infant Massage USA has over 900 active CEIM Members available across the US to teach parents and caregivers.

View the training calendar at
www.infantmassageusa.org/becomeaneducator

Find a CEIM near you at
www.infantmassageusa.org/parent-classes

CONTACT US

We would love to hear from you.

Get in touch to discuss training your staff, bringing a CEIM to your location, partnerships with your organization or any other topics.

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