

Prenatal Massage

Prenatal massage or Pregnancy massage, is therapeutic bodywork, which focuses on the special needs of the mother-to-be as her body goes through the changes of the childbirth experience. This fast-growing technique has also attracted labor and delivery nurses, midwives, childbirth educators and obstetricians. Prenatal massage enhances the function of muscles and joints, improves circulation and body tone, and relieves mental and physical fatigue. This popularity is resulting in a trend towards higher level of wellness, especially during pregnancy. Because of this, pregnancy is becoming more anticipated and enjoyable, especially because of the incredible and wondrous experience this is for a woman. The most common way to massage is to have the mother-to-be lying on her side.

What are the Benefits?

Not only does massage feel good, especially during pregnancy, there are other benefits for both mother-to-be and baby. Prenatal massage gives special attentions to the mother, which in turn nurtures the life that grows within her. Prenatal massage helps to reduce stress hormones in the body and is especially vital to the physical and emotional well-being as she adapts to her new body. A woman's body during pregnancy is challenged, changing, and stressed in many different ways.

Other benefits include:

- Emotional support and nurturing touch
- Relaxation and decreased insomnia
- Stress relief on weight-bearing joints
- Neck and back relief caused by muscle imbalances and weakness
- Assistance in maintaining proper posture
- Preparing the muscles to be used during childbirth
- Reducing the swelling to hands and feet
- Lessening sciatica pain
- Fewer calf cramping
- Relief from headaches and sinus congestion

Who is not a candidate for prenatal massage?

Massage is generally safe during pregnancy, if questionable; discuss this with your primary health care provider. Your massage therapist will need to know if you are having problems or complications before beginning the massage. The following are circumstances which massage should not be performed:

- Heavy discharge (watery or bloody)
- Diabetes
- Contagious illness

- Fever
- Morning sickness, Vomiting or Diarrhea
- Unusual pain
- Pre-eclampsia
- High blood pressure
- Abdominal pain
- Any malignant condition

In addition, pressure should not be sustained around the ankle bone or heel, this area is linked to the uterus and vagina and may cause early labor. The rest of the feet may be massaged.

Areas to be avoided during massage include:

- Skin rashes, open sores or bruises
- Inflammation
- Raised or distended varicose veins
- Local infection sites

Other Known Pointers

Massage during the first trimester is not recommended, due to the tremendous physical and hormonal changes a woman experiences. After the second trimester, massage is suggested because a woman has become comfortable with being pregnant.

Deep massage can cause more discomfort to a woman and is discouraged. The mother and therapist must keep open communication throughout the duration of the massage.

Unscented lotions should be used, due to the sensitivity a woman may experience with certain odors. The room should also be well ventilated with the air circulation at all times. Soft, soothing music is recommended to calm and aids in the relaxation and comfort.

During the second trimester, once a week is great from 10 minutes to 1 hour. The third trimester, once or twice a week is best for comfort. Mothers-to-be appreciate these appointments because they know they will feel relief from recurring problems such as sciatica, leg cramps and swelling.

Testimonials:

"My third pregnancy was the most difficult, but having frequent massages helped me get through the last 3 months." –

DE, Oakbrook, IL

"All the extra weight I gained really took a toll on my back and legs. Getting a few massages throughout my pregnancy made me feel so much relief and less stress." – KA, Chicago, IL

"Every pregnant woman should make it a point to get massaged during her entire pregnancy!" – CP, Lake Forest, IL