

Feedback: While receiving massage, be sure to let the massage therapist know if you're uncomfortable, thirsty, need a bathroom break, or have other concerns.

Pressure: Pain which may be felt by you during a pregnancy massage can also be felt by the growing baby. Advise the massage therapist if less pressure is needed.

Choosing a Massage Therapist

Your massage therapist should have adequate training in pregnancy massage. This specialized instruction may range from a course outlining fundamental pregnancy massage information, to a more extensive training leading to certification.

Depending upon their training, massage therapists may use a variety of massage styles and techniques. Whether the massage therapist is female or male is your choice. The most important consideration is that you are comfortable with, and trust the massage therapist you choose.

Scheduling a Massage Session

Many pregnancy massage educators recommend receiving the first massage after 13 weeks gestation.¹ It is suggested that you receive a massage once a week (or more) during the second trimester, and twice a week (or more) during the third trimester. Typically, a pregnancy massage session will last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour or longer.

Prior to scheduling your first appointment, ask your massage therapist about the fee structure. This will help avoid any misunderstanding regarding payment. Some massage therapists offer different types of payment plans for regularly scheduled sessions while pregnant. This could be a cost effective method for receiving pregnancy massage throughout your term.

Post-partum and Infant Massage

Do not overlook the value of massage for recovery from the birthing event, or for learning how to massage your baby. Post-partum massage helps restore your muscles to a healthier, more normal status. In addition, many pregnancy massage therapists also teach infant massage for parents. This is easy to learn, fun, and good for the both of you!

Footnotes

1. *Massage During Pregnancy*. By Bette Waters. RTP, 1995.

References

On the Newsstand

Massage Magazine
Massage Therapy Journal
Parenting
Mothering

In the Library or Bookstore

Bette Waters CNM, *Massage During Pregnancy*. Fuquay-Varina, NC: RTP, 1995.
Penny Simpkin, PT, *The Birth Partner*, Boston, MA: The Harvard Common Press, 1989.
Elaine Stillerman, LMT, *Mother Massage*. New York, NY: Delta Book, 1994.
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Massage during PREGNANCY

Minimizes stress, promotes relaxation



THERAPEUTIC
MASSAGE

For a Healthier Life

Benefits of Massage During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, a woman's body undergoes tremendous changes. Some of the by-products of these changes result in a number of uncomfortable conditions. Massage during pregnancy helps relieve many of these complaints through the positive physiological effects of soft tissue manipulation.

The overall goals for pregnancy massage are to help minimize stress, promote relaxation, and prepare the muscles for child birth. In addition, there are specific techniques and movements which are designed to help relieve particular conditions, including:

- Low back pain
- Swelling of hands and feet
- Headaches
- Calf cramps
- Insomnia
- Sciatic Pain
- Sinus congestion

How Pregnancy Massage Helps

Massage involves manipulation of the soft tissues, and is the physical movement, stroking, and

stretching of muscles, tendons, ligaments, and other soft tissue. One major physiological effect of this manipulation is an increase of blood circulation to the muscles being massaged. This results in more oxygen and nutrient availability to these tissues, which blood is designed to transport. In addition, enhanced blood flow will remove metabolic waste products that have built up in the muscles. Some other major physiological effects of soft tissue manipulation include improving muscle pliability and joint flexibility, decrease muscle tension, and calming nervous irritability.

Precautions

In most instances, pregnancy massage can be received safely. At times, there are reasons not to receive massage or precautions that your massage therapists should take. It is therefore recommended that you consult with your primary health care provider prior to receiving pregnancy massage. The following are circumstances in which many authorities advise that no pregnancy massage should be performed.

- Heavy vaginal discharge (watery or bloody)
- Pre-eclampsia
- Diabetic
- High blood pressure
- Contagious illness
- Morning sickness
- Fever
- Abdominal pain

- Vomiting/Diarrhea
- Any malignant condition
- Unusual pain

Considerations

Position: May be supine, prone, or side-lying.

Draping: How much or how little clothing to wear during a pregnancy massage is up to you. What's most important is that you feel comfortable and secure.

What people are saying

“Massage in pregnancy is so beneficial for the mother and the baby that I no longer consider it a luxury. I recommend regular massage for all my pregnant patients.”
– Bette Waters, CNM, ACCE
Author of "Massage During Pregnancy"

“With pregnancy massage, I become in touch and aware of what muscles I carry my stress in. I can actually feel the stress leaving my body, followed with such a wonderful energy boost. I sleep so much better after a massage.”
– Kim Smith, Client

“I have found with my pregnancy patients, and during my own pregnancy, that massage keeps the body healthy, physically, mentally and emotionally. Feeling healthy in all aspects makes for a more pleasant pregnancy and healthy delivery.”
– Dr. Suzan J. Smith, Chiropractor

“Massaging my patients during labor has always been an important part of my practice, helping to relieve muscle tension and promoting relaxation. I highly recommend massage during pregnancy for the same reason; it's a wonderful way for couples/birth partners to be more involved with each other during this special time.”
– Brenda Woods, Certified Nurse Midwife

