Your Nurturing Touch: Practicing Infant Massage

*Touch is the first sense to develop (before your baby is born!) at just 7 weeks’ gestation. Before he can understand your words or see your face, touch is how your baby feels loved.*

The skin has an enormous number of sensory receptors for sensations like heat, cold, pressure, and pain. A piece of skin the size of a quarter contains more than 3 million cells, 50 nerve endings, and 3 feet of blood vessels. Think of all the messages you will send to your baby’s brain with just a few minutes of massage!

**Tips to get you started**

**Oil:** Use a natural vegetable oil (olive, safflower, sunflower, or canola). Pour a little in a small bottle or saucer. Have it near you during the massage. The oil helps your hands glide gently.

**Location:** Find a comfortable location where your baby will not roll off or fall, like the floor or a couch. Lay him on his back.

**Preparation:** Take a moment to breathe, relax, and be calm. Breathe in and let it out. Let go of the worries of the day (and the things yet to be done!)

**Permission:** Pour a dime-sized amount of oil in your hand. Rub your hands together to warm the oil. Look in your baby’s eyes, show him your hands, and ask him if he would like a massage. After a few times he will begin to expect this routine.

**Strokes for legs and feet**

**Toe Roll**
Gently touch each toe.

**Milking**
Stroke from the hip to the ankle.

**Thumb Over Thumb**
Move one thumb from the heel to the toes. Follow with the other thumb.

**Swedish Milking**
Stroke from the toe to the hip.
Rhymes

**Pat-a-cake**
Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man, 
bake me a cake as fast as you can.
*Pat your baby’s hands together in front of his chest.*
Roll it, pat it, and mark it with a B
*Move your baby’s hands over/under each other.*
And put it in the oven for Baby (or baby’s name) and me!
*Move your baby’s hands from his chest out – putting pan in the oven.*

**Hot Cross Buns**
Hot cross buns, hot cross buns.
*Cross your baby’s arms over his chest, open his arms. Repeat.*
One a penny, two a penny,
*Cross his arms, open his arms. Repeat.*
Hot cross buns.
*End with arms out to your baby’s sides.*

**Jack Be Nimble**
Jack be nimble, Jack be quick.
Jack jumped over the candle stick.
*Bring knees up toward the tummy and then down straight.*
He jumped so high he touched the sky
And didn’t come down ‘til the 4th of July.
*Repeat.*

Find more nursery rhymes at [www.zelo.com/family/nursery](http://www.zelo.com/family/nursery).
Always watch your baby’s cues and stop when he is ready to stop.
Remember that infant massage is done “with” your baby, not “to” your baby.
Responding to his cues builds self-esteem and trust.

You can discover more massage techniques through books or classes. The website [www.infantmassageusa.org](http://www.infantmassageusa.org) has links to instructors in your area.