

New Beginnings Skin Care & Massage

Fall/Winter

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Children and Massage

A Powerful Parental Ally

Shirley Vanderbilt

"Every child, no matter the age, should be massaged at bedtime on a regular basis." So says Tiffany Field, Ph.D., of the Touch Research Institute (TRI) in Miami, Fla. Field and her associates at TRI have worked diligently over the past decade proving the benefits of massage for children. But this is not a new concept.

Infant massage has long been a common practice in families of Eastern and African cultures. Many indigenous tribes use some form of bodywork to soothe, relax and heal their little ones, sometimes including scented oils and herbal remedies as part of the experience. With our modern technology and hurried lives, we

fail to thrive and even die without an adequate amount of physical contact. Adults, as well, can become depressed and ill if they are isolated from this most basic of human needs. Children who learn healthy views of touch and are provided with positive tactile experience by their caregivers are more likely to grow up to be adults with healthy self-esteem, a sense of appropriate boundaries and long-lasting intimate relationships.

TRI researcher Maria Hernandez-Reif, Ph.D., says she regularly gives massage to her own daughter. When asked if other parents should do the same, she says, "Absolutely, a daily massage at least. That's what the studies show. Regardless

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Massage can cultivate a sense of well-being and security for children.

frequently find ourselves lacking in quality family time and touching each other less. The ancient practice of massage can serve to reaffirm a close bond with our children, and to convey a comforting sense of security and trust.

Touch is the first sense to develop in humans. It is essential to our health and well-being. Babies have been known to

of whether it's an infant, a child with illness, a preschooler, pregnant women, or the elderly -- no matter who we studied we have found that massage benefits all age groups and individuals of different conditions."

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Kids Stress, Too

Massage is a wonderful stress-buster for children. "Oftentimes when we think about stress," Hernandez-Reif says, "we think it's just an adult condition, only adults have stress. But if you think about it, even young infants and children are prone to stress." A young child starting school who is unfamiliar with the area or children in the class will experience stress. Family illness or financial problems, divorce and even vacations can produce emotional strain. Hernandez-Reif notes that one of the consistent findings in studies of the benefits of massage therapy is a reduction in stress and stress hormone levels: "There is a relationship between stress and the immune system. If stress hormones are chronically elevated, the [hormone] cortisol will destroy the healthy immune cells that fight viruses and tumors and keep the immune system healthy. If you can reverse that, you not only reduce stress but also reduce stress hormones, allowing the immune system to bounce back and do its job, which is to heal the body and keep it healthy."

As for children's behavioral response to massage, she says, "They are happier and in a better mood. We have observed they appear more relaxed, calm and oftentimes fall asleep during massage." If it's the child's first massage, they may squirm a bit because they are not familiar with this type of touch. Due to the discomfort and pain of medical procedures inflicted on them, infants and especially premature babies may have developed a negative association with touch. Given this new, positive experience they relax and their bodies quiet down.

Infant Massage

One of the best ways to give your baby safe, positive messages about touch is to give her massage on a regular basis. Early infant massage may stimulate the developing nervous system and brain, and memory of that positive touch may then be permanently registered in the body cells. By improving circulation, respiration, digestion and elimination, massage promotes a sense of comfort in your baby and makes her less prone to colic. As the baby grows, the stroking of massage prepares the body for sitting, standing and walking by promoting

strength, motor coordination and self-confidence. Infant massage is becoming very popular with new parents and a number of resources are now available to get you started. In addition to books and videos, you can find certified infant massage therapy instructors in local private practice and at hospitals and clinics specializing in holistic medicine.

TRI's guideline of 15- to 20-minute sessions is a good rule to follow at home. Longer sessions can be overstimulating or even uncomfortable for a younger child with a short attention span.

Once massage is established as a family routine, it can benefit your child throughout his growing years. Preschoolers have shown better performance on tests of their intellectual and manual skills after a 15-minute massage. They also slept

better during naps, were less likely to be overactive, and had better behavior ratings.

For teens struggling with the growing pains of adolescence, massage helps to balance unstable hormones and can relieve anxiety by producing a state of relaxation. A supportive relationship with a massage therapist who gives them safe, unconditional touch can also increase their feelings of self-acceptance and self-confidence during those trying years.

Touch is essential to a child's development, sense of well-being, and good health. Kids reach out for touch as naturally as they do for food and water. A nightly massage can enhance the parent-child bond and ensure that touch is a positive, nurturing part of their human experience. And, as Field says, "They love it."



Giving your child a massage each day can help deepen the parent-child bond.

Are Your Candles Safe?

How to Choose Toxin-free Flames

Glynnis Osher

There is nothing like the inviting glow of a candle to make us feel relaxed, guide us into a meditative state, or harmonize the ambiance of a room. With all these life-enhancing attributes, it is troubling to think that many candles are toxic and doing more harm than good--but that may be the case.

The Problem

Most candles today are made from paraffin wax, a petroleum by-product that emits toxic fumes and soot into the air. There are up to eleven known carcinogenic compounds in paraffin candles that are considered toxic air agents by the state of California. Burning these candles can cause harm to the heart, lungs, circulatory, and nervous systems, especially a concern for young children, the elderly, and those with asthma or other already established respiratory problems. In addition, the burning of the fragrant oils in scented candles can create significant air pollution, as well.

Another possible hazard: wicks. While

U.S. candle makers voluntarily agreed 25 years ago to prohibit lead wicks, some imported candles may still contain lead. Ensure you're burning cotton wicks only.

The Solution

The good news is, you can still enjoy burning candles because there are safe and healthy alternatives. Conscious candle choices include beeswax and the increasingly popular soy wax. Unlike petroleum, soy is a sustainable and renewable resource. Soy wax is a vegetable by-product that is biodegradable and nontoxic. Many candle enthusiasts prefer soy candles because they burn clean and release very little or no soot into the air. Also, because soy wax is water soluble, clean up is easy and containers can be easily washed and reused. Another benefit of soy wax is the cooler burning temperature, making for a much longer burning candle.

For more information visit the website www.themysticmasala.com.



Candles are for relaxation, not toxification.

Massage for Old Injuries

Ancient Injuries Don't Have to Make You Feel Old

Art Riggs

Injuries such as chronic back pain, trick knees, and sticky shoulders are not necessarily something you just have to live with. Massage techniques might hold the key to unlocking this old pain.

Will Massage Help?

The benefits of massage will depend on the extent of the injury, how long ago it occurred, and on the skill of the therapist. Chronic and old injuries often require deeper and more precise treatments with less emphasis on general relaxation and working on the whole body. Massage works best for soft tissue injuries to muscles and tendons and is most effective in releasing adhesions and lengthening muscles that have shortened due to compensatory reactions to the injury. Tight and fibrous muscles not

only hurt at the muscle or its tendon, but can also interfere with proper joint movement and cause pain far away from the original injury.

Therapists who perform such work often have specialized names for their work--such as orthopedic massage, neuromuscular therapy, myofascial release, medical massage, etc.--but many massage therapists utilize an eclectic approach combining the best of the specialties.

It Works!

A recent Consumer Reports article ran the results of a survey of thousands of its readers and reported that massage was equal to chiropractic care in many areas, including back and neck pain. Massage

also ranked significantly higher than some other forms of treatment, such as physical therapy or drugs.

If that nagging injury persists, consider booking a massage. Be sure to discuss the injury with your practitioner: How did you receive the injury? Have you reinjured it? And what exactly are your symptoms? Often, the body compensates in one area to protect another that has been traumatized, and this can create new problems.

Discuss the issues with your massage therapist. (Sometimes just talking about old injuries can play a significant role in the healing process.) Together, the two of you can work to determine a treatment plan.

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