

Face, Head, Neck and Back

There are 53 muscles in the face, all of which are involved in sucking, teething, crying, smiling, blinking and interacting with the world around her. Tension accumulates in these muscles and massage helps to relieve this muscular tension.

Working on the head and face may bring forth powerful birth memories, especially in cases where there was forceful pushing, putting excess pressure on the baby's head, or use of instruments. Be prepared for strong emotional releases, and be ready to just hold and be present if they come.

Face

Start by asking permission – listen and respect the answer – if you get a “No”, rephrase and ask permission for a lesser amount of work. You started with “May I massage your head and face” – now ask “May I just give your head a little rug?” and then if the answer is still no, ask about the face. If all are still “No”, respect that and say “OK, we’ll leave that until next time when you are ready”. This reinforces that the baby is in charge of her own body, and builds confidence and trust in your relationship with her.

1. Using flat fingers, stroke out to the side of baby's face, from the center of the forehead. (repeat 4-5 times)
 - With thumbs, gently stroke over closed eyelids (repeat 4-5 times)
 - With thumbs, push up on the bridge of the nose, then with the sides of the thumbs, sweep out across the cheeks diagonally (repeat 4-5 times)
 - With thumbs, pull out across upper lip and lower lips (repeat 4-5)
 - Make small circles around the jaw with your fingertips (about 20 seconds)
 - With fingertips, go around the back of the ears, rub the ears between your thumb and index finger, and then run your fingertips down along side the jaw to the chin, pulling up at the chin (repeat 4-5 times)

Head

1. Gently cup your baby's head in both hands, evenly.
2. Relax, inhale slowly, hold, and exhale slowly.
3. Use your other hand to softly stroke all around the crown of the baby's head in a circular direction, using the weight of your relaxed hand and fingers. (continue for about a minute)
4. Use your fingertips to make light circles all around the crown of baby's head. (for about a minute)
5. Use both hands to cup baby's full head, and stroke from back of her head to the sides. (repeat 2-3 times)

Take time now for a quick love and cuddle, maybe rub noses, kiss her on the neck, and ask permission to turn her over so you can work on her back.

Back

1. You can position baby either on her stomach on a blanket on the surface where she has been or lay her across your lap, whichever works best for both of you.
2. Rub plenty of lotion/oil on your hands.
3. Paddling – Massage hand over hand down her back, shoulders to buttocks, along the spine. (repeat 4-5 times)
4. East/West – start at baby's shoulders with both hands together, thumb to little finger, hands at right angles to the spine. Move hands back and forth, in opposite directions, all the way down the back to the buttocks, then back up again to the shoulders. (repeat 4-5 times)
5. With your right hand stationary, cupping the baby's buttocks, pull your left hand down her back, starting from her neck, to meet your right hand. (repeat 4-5 times)
6. With your right hand at baby's feet (either just supporting the soles of her feet, or holding her legs at the ankles), repeat the swooping movement from her neck all the way down to her feet. (repeat 4-5 times)
7. Make small circles all around her back and buttocks, using your fingertips. Make small circles on her back, larger circles on her buttocks. (about 1 minute)
8. Combing – with fingers of right hand spread, comb down her back, from her neck to her buttocks, after several strokes down her back, let the pressure get lighter and lighter, indicating to her that you are done with the massage.