

Back to Center Massage Therapy

Summer 2011

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Expecting Moms Embrace Massage

Pregnancy Massage Contributes to Nine Healthy Months

Hope Bentley

During pregnancy physical and emotional changes cascade throughout the body. Nausea, fatigue, swelling, heartburn, headache, and emotional turbulence are just some of the symptoms that come with the territory. Fortunately, massage can help ease these issues, so that the mom-to-be can focus on what's most important: her baby.

The First Trimester

"In the first trimester I see a lot of cases of nerves," says Megan O'Connor, a New York-based certified prenatal massage therapist. "Massage can give reassurance." This is largely because newly pregnant women may experience a range of emotions--elation, anxiety,

founder of Niara Healing Arts Massage Therapy and Perinatal Support Systems, "It is absolutely safe and can be very beneficial for an expecting mother."

Having said that, there are some precautions to take when considering prenatal massage. If it is a high-risk pregnancy or there's a history of complications--diabetes, high blood pressure, miscarriages, placenta previa, preeclampsia, or any other medical condition--a midwife or doctor should be consulted before scheduling a massage. In addition, it is very important for pregnant clients to speak openly with their massage therapist about any concerns or issues.



Massage can help contribute to a healthy pregnancy--and a healthy baby.

contentment, and even fear--made more poignant by the hormonal changes that accompany pregnancy. Fortunately, massage therapy can help ground an expecting mother and ease the emotional roller coaster that comes with pregnancy.

But is massage safe in the first trimester? According to Susanrachel Condon,

On the other hand, bodywork techniques like shiatsu access the meridians used in acupuncture, including trigger points that can relieve nausea. According to O'Connor, a good therapist will also teach a mother-to-be how to activate the trigger points herself, as most nausea treatments are more

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*All I have seen
teaches me to
trust the
Creator for all
I have not
seen.*

-Ralph W Emerson

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effective when applied at least three times a day. Techniques such as this can be a great relief to a woman navigating the early days of pregnancy.

The Second Trimester

A woman in her second trimester may begin to have trouble with circulation, sometimes because the baby's weight begins to pinch the major veins in the mother's legs. Poor circulation can cause swelling of the extremities, headaches, and exacerbated carpal tunnel syndrome. Massage will increase circulation and help create space in the body to relieve the pressure from the baby's weight. Condon explains that weight gain and joint laxity can cause women to feel off balance and clumsy. Massage can relax the muscles around the joints and ground and balance a pregnant woman.

The Third Trimester

As the baby grows heavy in the final trimester of pregnancy, major changes are likely to occur in the musculoskeletal system, and massage can become even more essential.

"A lot of women feel discomfort in their lower backs because the womb is moored to the sacrum, which is that triangle of area at the base of the spine," O'Connor says. "The weight of the womb pulls on that mooring and can be very uncomfortable."

Women may also experience discomfort in their abdomen. As the baby grows, the mother's muscles are stretched, her organs are compacted, and her lungs are compressed. Massage can minimize or prevent abdominal muscle tear, a complication that happens with some women. A practitioner can also help reposition the baby to alleviate discomfort and ease breathing.

And when labor finally begins, massage can help facilitate the birth, perhaps especially appealing for women considering natural childbirth.

On the Table

But how exactly does a pregnant woman--complete with enormous tummy and tender chest--receive a massage? Many prenatal massages are given with the pregnant woman on her side, semi-reclined, briefly on her back,

or on a specially designed pregnancy massage table, and often with a network of pillows for support.

Condon explains that prenatal massage is not simply a regular massage except in a different position. A qualified prenatal massage therapist will know the changing physiognomy of a pregnant woman and will tailor the massage to the needs of the client.

Postpartum Massage

Now that baby is here, mom needs a massage more than ever. Says O'Connor, "I think postpartum massage is extremely underrated."

After baby arrives, bodywork can help a new mother ease back into her body again, relax sore muscles, address any abdominal muscle strains or tears that occurred during pregnancy, and cope with the life changes and lack of sleep

that come with a new baby. In addition, the uterus will sometimes linger low in the abdomen instead of returning to its proper place. A Maya abdominal massage therapist can help restore the uterus to its proper position.

Nursing moms may feel reluctant to book a massage due to leaking breasts, but O'Connor says not to worry. "Women shouldn't be concerned about massage while they're nursing, even if they feel like an uncapped fire hydrant!" she says. Practitioners will accommodate nursing women, with proper draping and towels.

Pregnancy is an important time that needs to be honored, and prenatal massage plays an important role. As the body goes through miraculous changes, bodywork facilitates pregnancy and helps the expectant mother stay comfortable, connected, and healthy.



Prenatal massage can greatly benefit an expecting mother throughout her pregnancy.

The Wonders of Water

For Skin Health and More

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Creams, nutritional supplements, treatments, lotions, and potions. We are always looking for the next miracle product to keep skin looking healthy and young. However, there is one essential, inexpensive, and often overlooked nutrient right at your fingertips: water.

Just as a car cannot function without oil, our bodies cannot function without water. After oxygen, H₂O is the most important component of the body, responsible for 65-70 percent of its composition. And of this, 80 percent is dedicated to the skin.

Water is the medium for various enzymatic and chemical reactions in the body. It moves nutrients, hormones, antibodies, and oxygen through the blood and lymphatic systems, and it also helps form the matrix of the skin. Devoid of water, the skin becomes dehydrated, resulting in a dry, dull tone.

It's likely that the moment a person feels thirsty, mild dehydration has already set

in. To keep the complexion looking smooth and blemish-free, drink water upon waking and continue drinking it throughout the day at one- to two-hour intervals. At least six 8-oz. glasses of water should be consumed daily and more if you are exercising, perspiring, and/or in hot weather. Ideally, intake should be between ten and twelve 8-oz. glasses of water a day. One note: Don't increase water intake all at once, as the kidneys and digestive system need time to adjust. Add one 8-oz. glass every day or every second day.

What counts toward your daily water intake? Just the basics: water and herbal tea. Caffeinated beverages and alcoholic drinks are diuretics that can contribute to dehydration, requiring even more hydration after drinking.

Not only is water important for skin health, it can also play a key role in the prevention of disease. Drinking eight glasses of water a day can decrease the risk of colon cancer, bladder cancer, and potentially even breast cancer.



Water helps keep the body at optimum health.

Hot or Cold for Injuries?

How to Know Which is Best for You

Art Riggs

We all know that treating an injury immediately after it happens can help minimize the pain and damage as well as facilitate recovery. But after rolling your ankle in a soccer game, or hurting your back when lifting your toddler, or tweaking your knee when stepping out of your car, what's best? Should you ice it to try to control inflammation, or would heat be better to promote circulation?

While it's difficult to establish a fail-safe rule for when to apply ice or heat, the general directive is to use ice for the first forty-eight to seventy-two hours after an acute injury and then switch to heat.

It Depends

The reality is that many conditions are not necessarily the result of a specific

injury. I call these conditions "recurrent acute" and find them by far the most common: sciatica that occurs when you drive a car; a back that flares up every time you garden; or tennis elbow from intense computer work. In these cases, consistent and frequent applications of ice may prove very helpful over long periods of time, particularly immediately after experiencing the event that causes problems.

Conversely, back or other muscle spasms caused by overexertion rather than injury may benefit greatly from heat immediately upon the onset of symptoms or immediately after exercise in order to relax the muscles and increase circulation. Also, muscle belly pain not resulting from acute and

serious trauma generally responds well to heat, which can break the spasms and release the strain. On the other hand, nerve and tendon pain--regardless of the duration of symptoms, even if you've been experiencing them for months--benefit from ice.

What Works for You

The bottom line: different individuals will constitutionally vary greatly in their reactions. Some people are more prone to the types of inflammation exacerbated by heat, while others find their bodies contracting and tightening at the mere mention of ice. Try each option and pay close attention to how your body and mind respond, and let your gut be your guide. Ultimately, what works best for you is, well, what's best for you.

We all have possibilities we don't know about. We can do things we don't even dream we can do.

-Dale Carnegie

With the summer almost at an end--I want to thank you for spreading the word about Back to Center Massage Therapy. I continue to see new clients on the table--and it is largely because of you, my regulars. Remember that for each referral who books with me, you get \$5 off your next visit!

It has been a great summer supporting some wonderful events--such as the Courage Classic, Triple Bypass, and Camp Discovery. I continue to enjoy sports massage, integrative, deep tissue, trauma touch as well as prenatal and craniosacral therapy modalities. If you'd like to try something new, talk to me before your next session!

As the fall begins--I am offering a FREE MASSAGE, along with 2 personal training sessions and a free nutritional assessment or chiropractic adjustment. This is a wellness contest in collaboration with two other practitioners... Go to: <http://www.facebook.com/backtocentermassage> for all of the details and enter yourself or a deserving lady friend by 9/5/11.

I have also had a number of people ask about couples classes. If you are interested, please shoot me a quick email so I can gauge the interest (and what night or day would be best for the class).

I look forward to seeing you on the table soon. Feel free to schedule at www.backtocentermassage.clickbook.net

BTC Massage

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Member, **Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals**