

Pregnancy & Massage

As you moms-to-be know, most pregnant women feel discomfort and added stress on their bodies at various points in their pregnancies. That may be why more and more pregnant women are discovering and benefiting from prenatal massage. Massage therapy has long been recognized as an effective means of stress relief. During pregnancy, that benefit does double duty, relaxing the mother and reducing the flow of stress hormones to the baby. Most women find that they sleep much better after a massage. They feel more spacious and fluid in their bodies, able to move with greater ease and comfort.

What is pre-natal massage?

Massage during pregnancy is therapeutic bodywork which focuses on the special needs of the mother-to-be as her body goes through the dramatic changes of the childbirth experience. It is a fast-growing field in the United States that has attracted the interest of labor and delivery nurses, nurse-midwives, childbirth educators and obstetricians. Massage therapy enhances the function of muscles and joints, improves circulation and general body tone, and relieves mental and physical fatigue. Prenatal massage also reduces inflammation and swelling of the feet and hands.

The popularity of prenatal massage is the result of a trend toward a higher level of wellness, especially during pregnancy. Many women are postponing childbirth until they have achieved other goals, such as careers and relationships. Because of this, pregnancy is anticipated and enjoyed to its fullest for the wondrous experience it is. Today's pregnant women, along with other health care consumer are looking for alternative approaches to support traditional health services.

Benefits of prenatal massage include:

- Emotional support and nurturing touch
- Relaxation and decreased insomnia;
- Stress relief on weight-bearing joints, such as ankles, lower back and pelvis
- Neck and back pain relief caused by muscle imbalance and weakness
- Assistance in maintaining proper posture
- Preparing the muscles used during childbirth

- Reduced swelling in hands and feet thru lymphatic drainage
- Lessened sciatic pain; Fewer leg cramps;
- Headache and sinus congestion relief.
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Pregnancy massage can be done in different ways. Typically, pregnant women lie on their sides to be massaged, but here at Spa Therapy we use the latest technology for our pregnant guests. The pregnancy pad for ultimate comfort and relaxation allows the expectant mom to lie on their bellies, since a specifically designed pillow has made it possible for expectant moms, no matter how far along they are, to lie flat on their stomachs. It accomplishes this with a deep center cutout in the pillow, so that bellies are accommodated and moms-to-be are relaxed and comfortable. The majority of my pregnant clients can't wait to lie on their bellies and many times I get asked if they can take the pad home with them.

In addition to the facts that massage during pregnancy just plain feels good, there are many other benefits for the mom-to-be and her baby, too. A study conducted by Dr. Tiffany Field at the University Of Miami School Of Medicine showed that massage actually reduces stress hormones in the body. Touch is vital to the mother's physical and emotional well-being as she adapts to her new body image. Regardless of individual circumstances, a pregnant woman's body is challenged, changed and stressed in many ways. Massage gives special attention to the mother-to-be, which in turn nurtures the new life that grows within her.

Is prenatal massage for you?

Massage during pregnancy is usually safe for most mothers. Here at Spa Therapy our Massage Therapists are trained in the latest techniques for mothers-to-be. We will want to know if you are having any problems or complications with your pregnancy before we begin the treatment. If you are, then we will require approval from your primary health care provider before proceeding with any bodywork. It is a good idea to get consent from your obstetrician prior to your visit with us. The following are circumstances in which massage should not be performed:

- Heavy discharge (watery or bloody);
- Diabetes
- Contagious illness
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Unusual pain
- Pre-eclampsia
- High blood pressure
- Uncontrolled morning sickness
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Any malignant condition

Because of the tremendous physical and hormonal changes that occur in the expectant mother, I do not recommend any massage during the first trimester. In my opinion, this is the time for the mother to get comfortable with being pregnant. The second and third trimesters are wonderful times to begin prenatal massage

Massage can be performed anywhere from one half hour to a full hour depending on how much time you have and how much discomfort you are experiencing. Once a week is great and two times a week is wonderful. I have found that my pregnant clients appreciate their massage therapy appointments because they know that relief is a short time away. They look forward to their appointments to ease recurring problems such as sciatica, leg cramps, feet and hand swelling and back pain. If you are pregnant or know of someone who is, talk to them about the many benefits of pre-natal massage. It will ease any discomfort that you or they may be feeling.

Dr. Stan Nowinski, leading Yuba-Sutter OB/GYN states, "many patients can attest to the benefits of massage. It is beneficial to discuss this with your obstetrician so that he /she may be aware of symptoms of importance."

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