

Infant massage benefits for infants and parents/caregivers: A critical review

INFANT MASSAGE IS ONE OF THREE EVIDENCE BASED CAREGIVING ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING BONDING AND ATTACHMENT

Aim

“Does providing infant massage benefit the infant and the parents or caregivers?”

Methods

Thirty-one peer reviewed published research articles were selected for review to analyze the outcomes of providing infant massage. Of the thirty-articles, twenty-eight were experimental designs and five were mixed methods. No qualitative studies were included in this critical review.

Sample

The articles included for review targeted infants massaged by either parents, caregivers or health care professionals.

Participants

Mothers who reported depression symptoms, fathers, caregivers, infants and volunteers.

Countries Represented

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Finland, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Russia, S. Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the USA.

Measurements

Behavioral, Emotional and Physical

Settings

Child care, home, hospital, NICU, Observation rooms & Orphanages



Infant Outcomes

Increased interaction (engagement & entrainment behavior), physical growth, and sleep time. Decreased times of crying/colic, length of hospital stay, and diarrhea.

Parent/Caregiver Outcomes

Decreased symptoms of stress, anxiety & depression.

Increased care giving activities, interaction, improvements in lifestyles, and self efficacy.

Mothers reported less depression symptoms regardless of whether they massaged their infants or watched their infants being massaged.

Fathers increased the quality of care giving activities and infants initiated engagement with fathers after receiving infant massage.

Caregivers reported increased satisfaction in their lives after volunteering to massage infants.

Babies who were massaged left the hospital 3 weeks earlier than babies who were not massaged, gained weight, and slept longer.

Supplementary Articles

Fathers who participate in caring for their babies have an increase in oxytocin (bonding hormone) and model behaviors similar to the mothers.

Fathers who massaged their babies expressed feelings of *competence* and *confidence* in soothing their babies.

Fathers *value* Infant Massage as a caregiving activity that benefits both them and their babies and listed many benefits.

Fathers enjoyed being able to *comfort* and *soothe* their babies.