

# *Giving Baby Abhyanga*

There are many benefits to giving your baby abhyanga:

it becomes a quality time for interaction

it promotes confidence in bonding with baby

it enhances physical handling skills

it encourages communication by listening to both verbal and non-verbal cues





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### How to perform abhyanga on baby:

Oil: Ayurvedic recommendation is organic sesame oil, sweet almond oil, sunflower oil and coconut oil (the last two especially if your baby is prone to heat and rashes).

Oil the crown of the head; joints that move in circles get circular strokes; and long bones get long strokes.

- all movements go from heart to extremities to remove stress/soothe
  - move from the center towards fingers and toes
  - use mitten hands: fingers close together for soothing, less stimulation

For babies that are preemie and have been in NICU, where light, touch and medical care can be overstimulating, use 'containment holds'. With oil on the hands, rest with the flat of the palm on each new area. Move very slowly as you apply oil to baby.

***Note: Oily babies need to be picked up very carefully.***





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### How to perform abhyanga on baby:

The Five Warmths: Pay attention to the following five warmths for the best experience for your baby.

- Warm room: best to do in the bathroom, it's easier to warm a small space
  - Warm bath: after the massage. Oil and water don't mix; warm water after abhyanga will help the oils penetrate into baby's skin better
  - Warm oil: put your small oil bottle in a cup of hot water to warm for approx. 3 minutes
  - Warm hands: because it feels better, also trimmed fingernails and remove rings
  - Warm heart: share your heart and love with your baby
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### Precautions:

Avoid abhyanga until one-half hour after feeding.

Avoid waking up a sleeping baby for abhyanga.

Do not engage in infant abhyanga if baby is saying “no” or if very distressed.

Avoid baby’s abhyanga if baby is exhibiting any signs of respiratory congestion or fever.

Avoid if baby has any medical issues or abnormalities, especially those that make a baby prone to congestion—such as cystic fibrosis.

There are times when baby is done with abhyanga before you are.  
Be aware of the cues of your infant.





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## Precautions:

Babies use non-verbal cues to say “yes” and “no”. Cues can also be signals for a change in activity, break, or rest. Caregivers can learn to read, interpret and respond to these cues. Signals happen in the following areas:

Autonomic/Physiologic – Watch for reflexes, heart or respiratory rate

State – Check states of consciousness in Sleep or Activity

Sleep states: quiet, active, or drowsy

Activity States: quiet alert, active alert, or crying

Motor – Observe posture and/or muscle tone; movements of face, eyes or motor muscles

Verbal – Listen for tone in babbling, talking, crying

Quiet alert or active alert states with baby indicating “Yes” are the preferred starting points for infant abhyanga/massage





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## Baby says YES:

State - Coming to alert state

Eye - Eyes wide and bright

Face - Facial brightening, Brow raising

Fine Motor - Hands open, Fingers mildly flexed

Gross Motor - Head raising, Quiet Ready Posture, Nuzzling

## Baby says YES!!!:

Eye - Gaze at caregiver's face, Mutual gaze at each other

Face - Smiling, Mutual smiling

Gross Motor - Reaching towards caregiver, Turning head towards caregiver, Smooth cycling of arms/legs

Verbal - Babbling, Giggling, Feeding sounds, Talking





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## Baby says NO:

Baby showing early signs of disengagement

Eye - Eye blink, Eyes clenched, Eyes dull, Looks away

Face - Dull looking face, Facial grimace, Frown, Brow lowering, Wrinkled forehead, Increased sucking move, Lip compression, Lip grimace, Pout, Pucker face, Tongue show, "Ugh" face, Yawn, Somber gaze

Fine motor - Clinging, Wide spread fingers/toes, Hand to mouth, Hand to stomach, Hand to back of neck, Hand to ear, Clasp hands, Rapid wrist rotation, Self hug, Increased foot movement

Gross motor - Head lowering, Hunger posture, Leg kicking, Arms straight along sides, Legs straight with tension, Shoulder shrug, Turning head away, Passivity/immobility

Verbal - Fast breathing, Hiccups, Sigh, Whimpers, Increased sucking noise





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Baby says NO!!!:

Baby is overstimulated

Eye - Eye floating, Withdraws: alert to sleep, Averts gaze as far as possible

Face - Cry face

Gross motor - Back arch, Crawl away, Stop hand, "No" head shake, Overhead beating of arms, Pulling away, Pushing away, Hand pounding, Walking away

Verbal - Crying, Coughing, Choking, Gagging, Fussing, Saying "no", Spitting, Spitting up, Whining

Autonomic - Vomiting, Bowel movement, Flushing of skin, Mottling of skin, Pallor of skin, Increased or decreased heart rate/respiratory rate

