

# ***Pregnancy Massage: Benefits and Precautions***

***“Happy Mom, Healthy Baby!”***

Massage has many benefits during and after pregnancy. A therapist with specialized training will provide you the expertise and assistance in this very important time in life.

## ***Summary of Benefits:***

- Relief of hip, back & neck discomfort
- Decreased stress
- Reduced swelling
- Increased maternal hormone production
- Easier labor with fewer complications
- Healthier baby
- Improved recovery after delivery

Share the comforting benefits of massage therapy with your developing child. Increased circulation, relaxed muscles, enhanced immune system and reduced stress will nourish the body, mind and spirit of you and Baby.

***First Trimester.*** Massage techniques during the first trimester are similar to any massage with the goal being relaxation, pain relief, etc. Therapy to the abdomen is avoided and aromatherapy is more conservative. The first trimester is a good time to establish a partnership with a prenatal and postpartum massage therapist to assist you through a healthy, comfortable and safe pregnancy.

***Second Trimester.*** Expectant moms usually feel well and have more energy during the second trimester, but aches and pains progressively increase as your body changes with baby growth. Postural misalignment causes low back pain; exaggerated spinal curves create shoulder and neck strain. Massage promotes physical, mental and emotional balance. Research from University of Miami Touch Research Institute demonstrates that massage decreases tension, stress,

anxiety and depression caused by pregnancy's hormonal changes.

***Third Trimester.*** Pregnancy can take a toll on your body. Increased back and hip pain, swollen legs, restlessness, fatigue, and headaches are common, especially as the due date approaches. Massage relieves aches, pains and cramps in the hips, back and shoulders. Swelling is decreased and stress levels are lowered. As your baby grows and you approach your due date, your joints begin to loosen from the relaxin hormone, which creates hip discomfort and feeling “loose” with movements. Massage, stretching and other



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techniques during the third trimester can help you prepare for labor and delivery. Expectant moms often increase the frequency of massage therapy during the last month of pregnancy.

**Labor and Delivery.** Advanced therapy techniques during the last weeks prepare the pelvis and birthing muscles for better labor and delivery. Studies show that labor is shorter with fewer complications for massage clients and there is a lower incidence of C-sections. Massage improves the outcome of labor by preparing the pelvis and hip muscles, reducing stress levels and increasing the confidence and knowledge of Mom before labor starts. Massage during labor by a trained doula is also very effective in facilitating labor and delivery. Health scores of babies at delivery are higher when moms receive pregnancy massage (Brazelton Neonatal Assessment).

**Postpartum.** Massage therapy after delivery helps with physical and emotional adjustments. It helps restore your body to its pre-pregnancy condition, supports healthy lactation, reduces stress hormones and supports life transitions. Specialized therapy can treat abdominal muscle separation, bladder disorders, post-episiotomy soreness, and C-section healing. Your massage therapist may also be able to support specific needs like postpartum depression and learning infant massage.

**High-Risk Pregnancies.** Pregnant moms with certain medical conditions, lifestyle factors, pregnancy complications or age (younger or older) may be classified as “high-risk.” If you are considered to have a high-risk pregnancy, obtain a medical release for massage therapy from your healthcare provider, as it can be very beneficial for a healthy pregnancy and delivery. Massage therapy is known to reduce blood pressure, increase circulation, improve fetal nourishment, enhance glucose metabolism and balance your hormones. This promotes a healthier and more relaxed mom and baby. Your therapist can support your care during a difficult pregnancy when determined safe by your doctor.

**Safety and Pregnancy Massage.** Many wonder about the safety of Mom and Baby during massage therapy. Common concerns may be:

- Will Baby be injured from massage?
- Can I lie on my stomach during massage?
- Is it safe to massage the abdomen?
- Can my legs be massaged during pregnancy?
- Why can't I lie on my back during massage?

These are excellent questions! Certified pregnancy massage therapists will keep you and Baby safe during the sessions with special positioning. Circulation can be compromised in certain positions. Trained therapists have unique skills and will avoid certain techniques that may be harmful. Enjoy relaxing and therapeutic bodywork in the hands of a therapist that you can trust.

In summary, studies from the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami show that massage therapy during pregnancy relieves stress, eliminates discomfort and results in healthier babies. Pregnant clients who receive massage therapy are more comfortable through labor and use fewer medications. They have shorter labor, reduced complications and fewer C-sections. Stress is reduced and depressed moms benefit from massage therapy.

**Important note:** Prenatal (pregnancy) massage therapy does not replace prenatal health care by physicians, nurse practitioners and midwives. These professionals are essential for maternal health and vital monitoring of your baby's health. Massage practitioners have a vital role supplementing medical care. Moms considered to have a high-risk pregnancy should have medical clearance for massage therapy.

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