

Paediatric Massage Therapy and Infant Growth

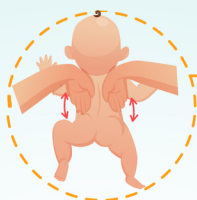
Massage is used as a complementary and alternative therapy worldwide, especially in the paediatric population. It involves manipulating soft tissues with movements like kneading, pressing, grasping, stretching, rubbing etc. This intervention is used for improving medical conditions, promoting growth, improving immunity and for disease prevention.¹

Indian traditional medicine promotes paediatric oil massage therapy as an integral part of infant care. Studies show that using oil, enhance the therapeutic effects of massage.³

Benefits of Massage Therapy



Massage promotes prolonged periods of sleep with fewer night waking in infants.⁴



Adequate sleep is associated with better physical growth and release of growth hormone.⁵



Massage therapy aids in increased vagal activity leading to lower cortisol levels and an increase in activity and number of natural killer cells - which are known to kill bacterial and viral as well as cancer cells. Therefore, massage promotes enhanced immune function which means better health and therefore normal growth.⁴



Lower cortisol levels are associated with increased insulin like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) levels leading to weight gain. IGF-1 stimulates cell growth and multiplication. IGF-1 is positively associated with weight gain, increase in length and ponderal index.⁶



Massage leads to reduced bilirubin levels, decreased sleep disturbances, reduced colic, leading to reduction in stress and promoting development.²

Paediatric massage therapy has shown positive outcomes in terms of growth, improving immunity as well as in disease prevention. There are enhanced benefits of massage therapy for the mother too when they massage their infants.⁴ Hence paediatric massage therapy is justified as a complementary therapy for infant wellbeing and growth.

References:

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