

## Benefits of Prenatal Massage

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Prenatal massage is therapeutic bodywork that focuses on the special needs of the mother-to-be as her body goes through the dramatic changes of pregnancy. It enhances the function of muscles and joints, improves circulation and general body tone, and relieves mental and physical fatigue. The gentle, non-invasive approach of prenatal massage can ease discomfort associated with pregnancy, help the mother-to-be prepare for labour and give her nurturing emotional support.



Prenatal massage offers a wide range of physiological, emotional and psychological benefits.

- Alleviates stress on weight-bearing joints and musculo-fascial structures
- Assists in remedying many of the common discomforts experienced during pregnancy: muscular discomforts, lower-back pain, upper-back pain, headaches, leg cramps, sciatica, stiffness, tension and knots, carpal tunnel syndrome, heartburn and acid reflux, fatigue, varicose veins, nasal congestion, shortness of breath, oedema of the lower extremities, neck pain, interscapular pain, sacroiliac and hip joint pain and constipation
- Increases blood circulation, which provides more oxygen and nutrients to both mother and foetus and stimulates the lymph system, thereby increasing immunity and removal of toxins
- Stabilizes hormonal levels and helps relieve depression or anxiety caused by hormonal changes
- Soothes and relaxes the nervous system by releasing endorphins into the mother's body. As a result, the expectant mother feels more relaxed and at ease, and will also sleep more easily and more deeply
- Assists in maintaining good posture and adjusting to a changing alignment caused by the baby's increasing weight. Massage increases muscle tone and flexibility, enhancing the ability to carry this extra weight while also relieving aches and pains, leg cramps and muscle spasms
- Eases the load on the heart and helps keep blood pressure in check
- Enhances the pliability of skin and underlying tissues
- Supports the return of blood to the heart and increases blood flow to the uterus and placenta. With the enormous demands placed on the circulatory system during pregnancy, blood volume may increase up to 60 percent compared to pre-pregnancy levels. As pregnancy progresses and the uterus enlarges and presses deep into the pelvic bowl, venous return to the heart is hampered
- Prepares the mother-to-be for an easier delivery with its sedating effect on the nervous system, promoting relaxation and stress relief
- Offers a natural, safe, drug-free alternative choice for pain relief, since taking medications are often limited during a pregnancy for the sake of the unborn child
- In addition to the physical benefits, prenatal massage provides expecting women with the emotional support and nurturing touch provided by nonsexual human touch and energy.

Prenatal massage can be performed by (1) having an expectant woman lie on her side, propped up with pillows; (2) utilizing specially designed maternity cushioning systems, which allow the expectant mother to lie on her stomach, supported by the cushions; or (3) positioning the mother-to-be in a semi-reclining position propped up by pillows.



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