

The Magazine for Parents of Multiples

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Massaging  
Infant  
Multiples

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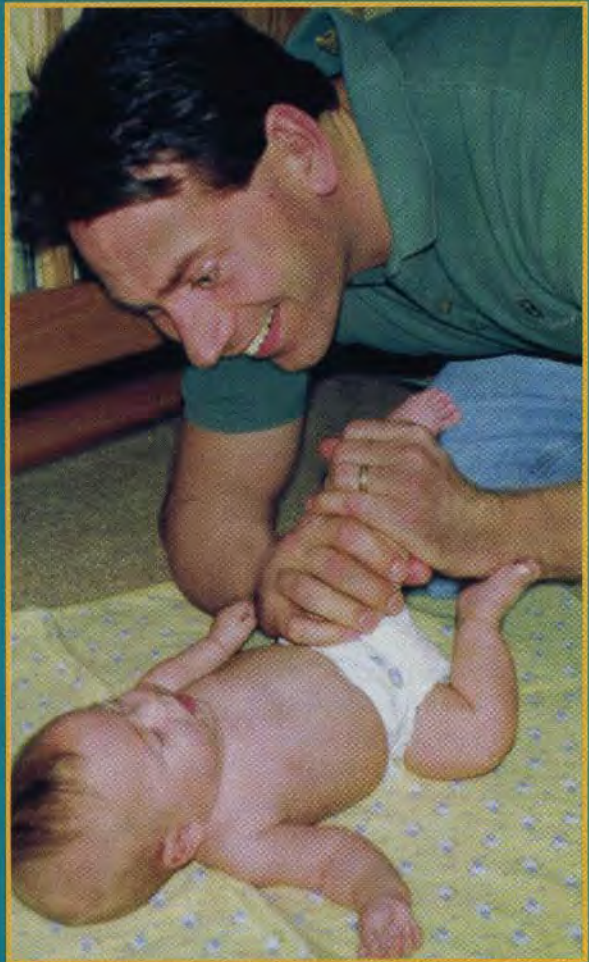
Know-It-All Twins

Learning Styles  
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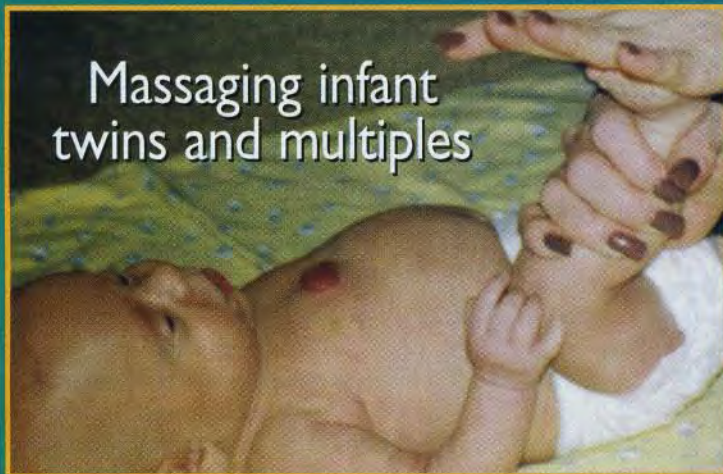
1, 2, 3 Potty!



# Joyful Touches of Love



## Massaging infant twins and multiples



by Diana Moore, M.S., L.M.T., C.I.M.I.

**W**hile I was preparing to teach an infant massage class at the county library, I saw a mother with two babies lying side-by-side. "Twins?" I asked. "Yes," she proudly stated. "Fantastic, does that mean that I have a baby to massage too?" The mother smiled.

Massaging twins is no different than massaging singletons. The techniques are the same for one, two or more. The trick is in how to go about setting up your quiet massage time together.

I have taught infant massage for more than 20 years and it is evident to me that massage is one of the most important means of communication parents can share with their newborns. Massaging is a sacred art. It is a very special experience for both the newborns and the parents. Fathers especially enjoy the rewards of the close physical bond. It fosters love, compassion and respect for the newborn babies.

Kerri Veenstra of Portland, Oregon, mother of boy/girl twins born in November 1998, commented on learning infant massage techniques. She said, "With two babies, I

think infant massage will help with bonding, and provide special time to devote to one baby at a time." She continued to tell me that, "everything right now is an assembly line, so I feel it will help me to slow down and spend some individual quality time with each one."

Infant massage provides parents of multiples with special contact time together. Twins provide double the joy, but also double the work. Massaging can provide you with special quality moments that increase those important connections between parent and child.

### Scientific basis

Touch is a biological necessity for healthy growth and development. Neuroscientists tell us that experiences during infancy, the first days, weeks and months of life, have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain. During the first three years of life, 90% of brain growth occurs. What we do during this critical time will affect our babies for a lifetime. As parents, we need to provide our children with

INFANT TWINS KYLE AND ABBY BEING MASSAGED BY THEIR MOTHER, JUDY, AND THEIR FATHER, TRACY

a rich sensory environment. This environment should include experiences that involve touch, taste, sound, smell, vision, and movement (massage).

Massaging your infants is feeding the babies through the skin. It is an extension of the experience they received in the womb. The gentle caressing of the mother's body embracing her babies is carried on long after birth through skin-to-skin contact and a continuous sensory interactive world.

Larry White, M.D., a child psychiatrist at Hillcrest & St. Anthony's Hospitals in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, confirms that, "the greatest dilemma in multiple birth situations is the need for multiple caregivers so that the babies' cues can be read and needs of touch met. Remembering that tactile stimulation is so significant during those first days and months of life, it is a crucial factor that extended families be available, and attuned to babies' needs, to help in the care giving process in multiple birth families."

### Preemies and touch

Parents of preemies gain confidence through healing touch. Mirta B. Veber, M.D., director of newborn services and the director of the special care nursery at Pascack Valley Hospital in Westwood, New Jersey, has implemented infant massage in her unit. She says, "the environment of the NICU is extremely hectic for premature infants, but parents, together with doctors and nurses, can do many things to make it less stressful for their babies. We teach our parents

## A shared experience

### For babies

- Nourishes babies emotionally.
- Begins a loving, intimate communication.
- Strengthens primary systems—circulatory, respiratory, gastrointestinal, nervous and musculature as well as the immune system.
- Reduces gas and colic pains.
- Helps enhance sleep.
- Stimulates growth hormones.
- Promotes relaxation and tension release.

### For the parent

- Promotes understanding of infant's responsiveness cues.
- Enhances communication and emotional ties.
- Increases confidence and handling skills.
- Greatly improves the bond of affectional attachment.
- Promotes positive parental feelings.

that love is a powerful force, and that consistent loving touch is very calming for the premature infant."

Massaging babies has proven to be a very rewarding experience. The staff encourages moms and dads to get involved in infant massage as soon as the health of the baby allows.

Researchers at the University of Miami's Touch Research Institute have conducted numerous studies on the therapeutic effects of touch. Premature babies given daily massage gained 47% more weight. Statistics show that they were discharged earlier from the hospital. The evidence is clear. Massaging babies provides an important source of tactile stimulation.

### The many benefits of loving touch

Tracy and Judy Valachovic of Webster, New York, are parents of twins born at 28 weeks gestation. They were extremely pleased to learn infant massage. "We have found it a great family activity and a new way to bond with the babies. Kyle and Abby have responded beautifully. Not only do they relax and sleep better and longer, but they also seem to look forward to the massage. We are often able to calm them down using the massage techniques. We wish that we had been familiar with these techniques while the babies were in the NICU." ♥

*Diana Moore, M.S., L.M.T., C.I.M.I., of Portland, Oregon, is a certified infant massage instructor, and an international trainer/speaker and founder of the International Loving Touch Foundation, Inc. She is the creator of Baby's First Touch video.*

## A step-by-step approach

For parents of twins, I recommend massaging one baby at a time, two at a time or each parent massaging an infant.

- Sit comfortably.
- Put on relaxing music.
- Lay your baby face-to-face with you.
- Ask baby for permission to massage.
- Watch for cues of readiness: eyes sparkle and a smile.
- Use lightweight natural oil or cream. For information on Earthling's Bath and Body Oil, call (888) GO BABY O. For Origins' Bare Hugs™ Massage Cream, call (800) ORIGINS.



### Massage sequence:

Legs and feet—Begin with long, sweeping stroking motions down the leg toward the foot—three times. Hands together, "turn and caress" in a gentle, wringing motion over the thigh and down the leg. Do each little piggy. Reverse stroking toward the heart. Finish by rolling the muscle together as if you are making a Playdough rope. Lightly feather stroke to end.

Tummy—Smooth your hands around the stomach in a clockwise direction. Say, "I Love You." This aids in digestion. Press hands gently into the stomach and scoop down over the navel. Walk your fingers across your baby's stomach as though you are making a rainbow. Sing a rainbow song.

Chest—With the palms of your hands,

make fan-out strokes over the heart toward your baby's sides. Stroke upward following the sternum. Continue in an alternating criss-cross motion from the waist up to the opposite shoulder.

Arms and Hands—Follow the same pattern as for legs and feet.

Face—Make small circles on scalp, gentle strokes over the face and small circles under the jaw. Don't forget the ears.

Back—Lay your baby horizontally across your outstretched legs. Smooth your hands from the back of the neck down to the tailbone. Stream your hands back and forth sideways across the back. Finish with finger circles all over the back and a gentle combing motion, combing with the hand.

For more information about infant massage, visit [www.lovingtouch.com](http://www.lovingtouch.com).