

***Baby Massage  
Instructor***  
LESSON 2 – BENEFITS



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***Learning Outcomes***

By the end of this session, you will:

- Be able list the benefits of touch
- Be able to explain the benefits of massage
- Be able to describe the newborn reflexes



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***Benefits of Touch***

- There are studies showing that touch signals safety and trust, it soothes.
- Basic warm touch calms cardiovascular stress.
- It activates the body's vagus nerve, which is intimately involved with our compassionate response, and a simple touch can trigger release of oxytocin, aka "the love hormone."



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### ***Touch & Babies***

- A baby's first experience with the surrounding environment occurs through touch, developing prenatally as early as 16 weeks.
- This sense is essential to children's growth of physical abilities, language and cognitive skills, and social-emotional competency.
- Touch not only impacts short-term development during infancy and early childhood, but also has long-term effects, suggesting the power of positive, gentle touch from birth.



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### ***Touch & Babies***

- Skin-to-skin contact lets children know that they're safe and protected, building trust between child and parent.
- Oxytocin, known as the "bonding" hormone, is released during times of close physical contact such as breastfeeding.
- Parent-child interactions may help foster the neurodevelopment of brain regions producing oxytocin, thus enhancing children's future socio-emotional development.<sup>2</sup>
- Touch can benefit both mothers and infants alike, forming a bonding connection between parent and child.
- Infants of depressed mothers who massage their infants show improvement in growth and development while the mothers' depression levels decreases.



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### ***Benefits of Baby Massage (Baby)***

- Helping your baby to feel securely attached
- Helping your baby to feel more loved, valued and respected
- Reduced crying and emotional distress
- Increased levels of relaxation and longer sleep
- Development of body awareness and coordination
- Relief from wind, colic, constipation and teething discomfort



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### ***Benefits of Baby Massage (Parent/Carer)***

- Feeling closer to your baby
- Gaining a deeper understanding of your baby's behavior, crying and body language
- Providing an enjoyable opportunity for you to spend one-to-one time with your baby
- Feeling the relaxing effects of giving your baby a massage
- Increased confidence in your ability to care for and nurture your baby
- Learning a life-long parenting skill



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### ***Newborn Reflexes***

- Rooting
- Sucking
- Moro
- Palmar grasp
- Plantar grasp



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### ***Root Reflex***



- This reflex begins when the corner of the baby's mouth is stroked or touched.
- The baby will turn his/her head and open his/her mouth to follow and "root" in the direction of the stroking.
- This helps the baby find the breast or bottle to begin feeding.



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### ***Sucking Reflex***

- Rooting helps the baby become ready to suck.
- When the roof of the baby's mouth is touched, the baby will begin to suck.
- This reflex does not begin until about the 32nd week of pregnancy and is not fully developed until about 36 weeks.
- Premature babies may have a weak or immature sucking ability because of this.
- Babies also have a hand-to-mouth reflex that goes with rooting and sucking and they may suck on fingers or hands.



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### ***Moro Reflex***

- The Moro reflex is often called a startle reflex because it usually occurs when a baby is startled by a loud sound or movement.
- In response to the sound, the baby throws back his/her head, extends out the arms and legs, cries, then pulls the arms and legs back in.
- A baby's own cry can startle him/her and begin this reflex.
- This reflex lasts until about five to six months old.



Moro (startle) Reflex



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### ***Palmar Grasp Reflex***

- Stroking the palm of a baby's hand causes the baby to close his/her fingers in a grasp.
- The grasp reflex lasts only a couple of months and is stronger in premature babies



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### ***Plantar Grasp Reflex***

- This is similar to the grasp reflex of the hand.
- If you place your thumb below the toe bed of an infant's foot and apply pressure, the toes will curl around your thumb, grasping it (flexion and adduction).
- This reflex is not present in many newborns.



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### ***Learning Outcomes***

- By the end of this session, you will:
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  - Be able to describe the newborn reflexes



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