

# I N F A N T M A S S A G E

## Constipation

Constipation is a condition where stools become firmer and harder. Your child will be troubled or in pain when they need to empty their bowels, and the bowels will not be emptied as often as usual. There are a number of conservative ways you can assist your child in treating constipation without having to resort to medications.

### Massage you baby's tummy

Massage can be used to help encourage your baby's bowels to move. Before starting any massage on your baby:

- \* Ensure the room is warm enough (especially if removing your child's clothing)
- \* Warm your hands by rubbing them together, or running them under some warm water for a few minutes
- \* Create a relaxing environment by performing massage in a comforting room with familiar surrounding, such as favourite toys or music to keep your baby as relaxed as possible
- \* Remain relaxed yourself

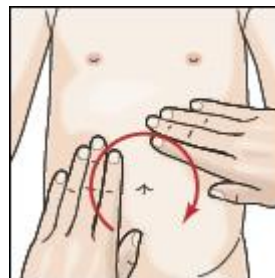
You can massage over clothing, but for tummy massage, we would recommend you use a little oil and massage directly on the skin. The warmth of the skin to skin contact can be very helpful for constipation as well.

For oil – use baby oil or all natural vegetable or fruit based oil. Good choices that you may already have at home include: grape seed oil or olive oil. Put a small drop of oil in your hands, about the size of a coin, and rub together to warm. Show your baby what you are doing, this way they'll start to associate the sight and sound with what comes next.

When doing these massage strokes, use a firm but gentle pressure. Always observe your baby to make sure they are comfortable with the massage. Feel free to try a lighter pressure or use a different stroke as you become more confident. Cease massage if your baby becomes agitated.

To massage your baby's tummy, place warmed hands on their tummy at or below the belly button. This is a small area, but it's important to target the bowel. Using flat palms gently stroke downward, using hand over hand, a paddling type motion. Next moving hands in a clockwise motion, (very important to move clockwise – if you go the wrong way, you'll create more issues), stroke baby's tummy in a circle.

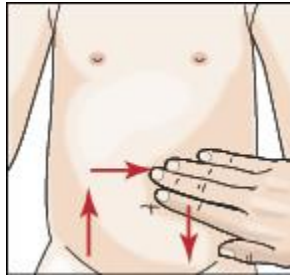
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Now try a 3-part stroke, easily remembered by the phrase "I Love You"

With baby laying on the floor facing you: (remember clockwise motion)

1. First trace the letter "I" on baby's left side
  2. Next draw an "L" starting on baby's right side, across the top of the tummy and down baby's left side
  3. Then draw an upside-down "U"
- Finish on the tummy by stroking down a few times.



During tummy massage your baby may have a bowel movement or release some air – great! You may wish to leave their nappy off during the massage session. Babies like to have the freedom of movement they gain without a nappy, so if you decide to leave it off, just have something underneath in case of any accidents.

#### **Move your baby's legs in a cycling motion**

If your baby does not tolerate massage well, there are other options available which can assist with the treatment of constipation. Try moving your baby's legs in a cycling motion.

Place your baby so they are lying on their back. Hold their legs and turn them gently in a cycling motion.

This will make the stomach muscles move and, in turn, put gentle pressure on the intestines to make them move.

#### **Give your baby a bath**

A warm bath can make your baby relax so the stools are passed more easily. Once your baby has relaxed in the bath, you can also massage their stomach (see above).