

How to do intentional touch at home:

Baby warm up and intentional touch routines are done while Baby is lying on the floor or bed, usually on a blanket. Begin with a “heart shaped” rhythmic stroking on Baby’s chest while chanting rhythmically or singing softly. It is important that adults be aware of their own body tension and consciously work to relax their own muscles and breathe deeply. The use of a calm voice, and plenty of eye contact, are also crucial. Next try a “milking” motion on each arm and leg, working from the trunk of the body to the fingers or toes.

Tips:

- Use a gentle stroke, but not so light that it becomes a tickle, yet not so strong that it produces discomfort and/or bruising.
- Start with only 5 minutes a day and work up to 15-20 minutes. It is never too early to begin.
- Never “force” a massage. For some babies, a time other than class is more suitable. For these babies, singing and chanting, rocking, even gently bouncing may be preferable during class time.
- Some initial “fussiness” may appear if babies are unaccustomed to massage. Judgment is required to determine when fussiness becomes too much and the massage should be discontinued until later.
- Massage at home can be done without clothes and with the use of a gentle oil if desired. Experts rely on coconut, almond, or calendula oil to lubricate hands and Baby’s skin. Many child development centers and hospitals now have classes in infant massage.

In class, the lessons move directly from intentional touch to a form of **exercises** for Baby. This may also be done at home. These exercises help Baby to learn about her body even more and foster the development of an internal steady beat. While intentional touch is calming and relaxing and uses a soft rhythmic voice, exercise time can be more lively. Exaggerate the steady beat. Be sure to use all five levels of touching body part to body part:

- Move Baby’s arms up/down
- Move Baby’s legs up/down
- Move Baby’s right foot to touch left arm (cross-lateral movement)
- Move Baby’s left foot to touch right arm (cross-lateral movement)
- “Bicycle” Baby’s legs

Walking babies may enjoy doing these with the full body standing upright. Crawling babies can play “wheelbarrow” and can bounce on the lap while crossing arms and legs.

Dr. Verny (Secret Life of the Unborn Child) suggests that imposing some discipline on random movements which infants produce, such as squirming, kicking, etc., hastens the learning pace of the babies’ abilities to acquire useful information about the dimensions of their bodies and how each part works. The regular inclusion of both intentional touch and exercises is aimed at the overall growth and development of babies through music.