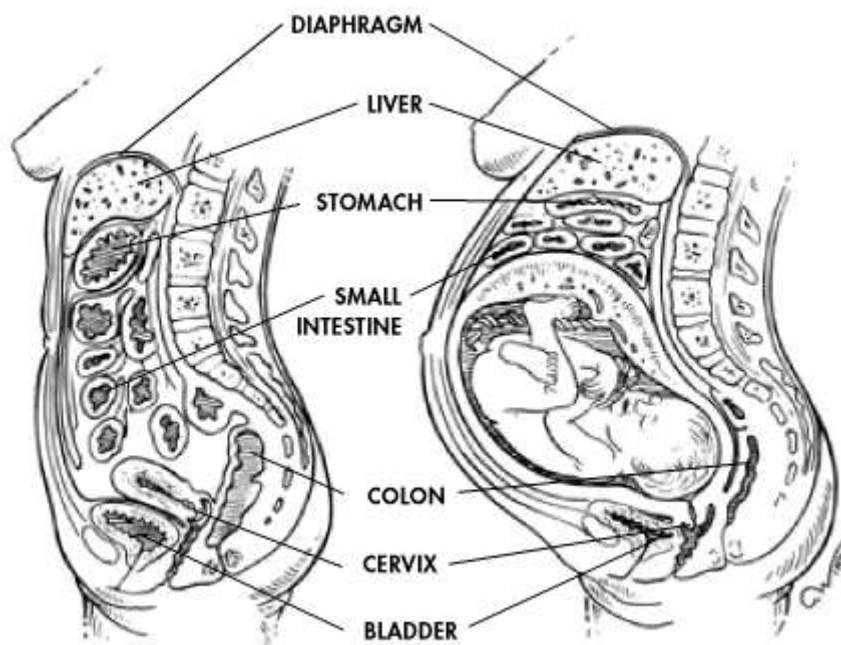


PRENATAL MASSAGE

By Spring Moffitt



I. Prenatal massage is:

- a. A set of techniques and standards that have been established to be used when performing massage therapy on a pregnant woman to support the physiologic, structural, and emotional well-being of both the expectant mother and the unborn child
- b. During pregnancy a woman's body undergoes tremendous changes from the very obvious increase in weight which taxes the musculoskeletal system to shifts in the production of hormones that may affect her emotional state.
- c. Prenatal massage is a supportive system of care that helps a pregnant woman adjust to the changes brought about by the formation of a new body shape and the adjustments made by that body to provide for the growing baby.

II. Prenatal massage is also known as:

- a. Pregnancy massage
- b. Maternity massage
- c. It has been expanded to perinatal massage which includes labor and postpartum massage care

III. History of Prenatal massage:

- a. Ayurvedic medicine has been practiced for about 3000 years. Texts from this discipline have entries about rubbing pregnant women with oils throughout the pregnancy as well as afterward.
- b. Sculptures of pregnant Eskimo women show that the rubbing of the back was used during labor.

Doulas were Greek slaves that attended the house lady during childbirth. The word has now come to refer to a woman experienced in childbirth that provides continuous physical and emotional support to expectant mothers. This ancient tradition expanded throughout many parts of the European world. Doulas are a regular scene in the hospitals in Ireland. One of the key aspects of their role of supplied support includes touch during labor. Studies have shown that having a doula may decrease:

- Epidural use by 60%
- Cesarean birth by 50%
- Narcotics use by 30%
- Forceps use by 30%
- Length of labor by 25%

- c. In 1979 Carole Osborne-Sheets began research which led to comprehensive training programs throughout North America
- d. Since training began in the United States and Canada, this field of study has exploded. However the explosion has caused some need for concern by giving access to unqualified persons. Videos and books are being bought by well meaning partners who want to help. It is not recommended that an unqualified person work on a pregnant woman because the risk factors are so great.

IV. Key people in this field

- a. Carole Osborne-Sheets- She conducted research and set initial standards for prenatal research and started training programs in North America. She expanded the role of prenatal massage therapists to teach pregnant women how to care for themselves, show partners how to safely become more involved with the process, instruct soon to be parents on safe, basic massage techniques to perform on new babies, and expanded the field to include postpartum care to help women re-adjust to the continuing changes of their body afterward.
- b. Tiffany Field- She has conducted research in touch therapy on women. Much of this research has provided support for this field, showing how important it is to have touch.
- d. Marshall Klaus- He has written a large number of books on pregnancy and how to care for oneself during that time. He has done a great amount of research in the area and some of the initial research done by Carole Osborn-Sheets is based on his work.

V. Prenatal massage affects a woman on all levels

- a. Prenatal massage affects a woman physiologically, structurally and emotionally.
- b. Physiologically it affects things such as hormone, gastrointestinal, urinary and circulatory systems. Many of the changes that take place in the body affect the function of the organs. Women experience things such as morning sickness and nausea, heartburn, constipation, frequency with urination, edema, and reduced circulation just to name a few.
- c. Structurally it reduces strains placed on the musculoskeletal system. During pregnancy many of the joints and connective tissues begin to soften to allow the baby to be able to pass through. Increased weight being carried increases stress on joints and ligaments.
- d. Emotionally it gives a woman a feeling of support and reduces stress levels.

VI. Some of the benefits

- a. Improves circulation
- b. Alleviates pain in the back, neck and joints
- c. Reduces swelling
- d. Increases flexibility
- e. Eases gastrointestinal issues
- f. Reduces stress levels
- g. May decrease labor time and pain

Circulation

Helps prevent spider and varicose veins
Increases blood flow to the uterus
Reduction of blood pressure
Increased blood and lymph circulation
Reduction of edema and the swelling caused by it.

Pain relief

Reduces muscle cramps
Alleviates soft tissue pain
Relieves musculoskeletal pain caused by increased weight
The decline of pain also helps to diminishes fatigue and depression levels

Gastrointestinal

Improves gastrointestinal functioning
Stimulates production of food absorption hormones to counter nutritional problems by women with morning sickness
Acupressure points on the wrist help decrease nausea and morning sickness

Reduced Stress levels

Stabilizes hormone production
Increased well being for both mother and unborn child
Gives the expectant mother a feeling of support
Aids in reducing fatigue and depression

VII. High risk factors

- a. Rh-negative – The factor in blood that could cause a pregnant woman's immune system to release antibodies that attack the red blood cells of her unborn child.
- b. Multiple baby pregnancy
- c. Previous miscarriages
- d. Diabetes
- e. Renal, cardiac, liver or connective tissue disorders
- f. Exposure to drugs or hazardous materials
- g. Mothers under 20 or over 35- there is an increased risk of miscarriage as well as birth defects in the child.

VIII. 1st trimester

- a. Most miscarriages happen during this period of time. Caution is very important.
- b. Avoid deep tissue work in the abdominal and lower back regions. Working on these regions could cause miscarriage. Avoiding the lower abdomen is usually best unless you are doing superficial light work.
- c. During the first trimester, many therapists still use the prone position because the stomach has not become overly large yet, however tender breasts may cause discomfort when laying on the stomach.
- d. There are acupressure points that are known to stimulate the uterus. These are also avoided to prevent causing miscarriage. Two of these acupressure points that can stimulate the uterus are near the ankle, there is one on the upper back, one on the hand and one on the feet.

IX. 2nd and 3rd trimester controversy

- a. Many massage therapists use a table with a hole cut out in the middle, a sling to hold the belly or pillows for the woman to rest on so that she may lie in a prone position.
- b. There are some who advocate a side laying position or chair massage because the prone position can cause excessive intrauterine pressure, strain of the lumbar area, and pressure on tender breasts. While extended time in the supine position may cause dizziness, shortness of breath and decreased circulation due to compression of the Vena Cava as well as strain to the sacroiliac joints.

X. Equipment

- a. The table shown is typical for therapists who work on pregnant women in the prone position. There is a precut hole in the middle.
- b. There are several reasons that many oils are not to be used on pregnant women. One reason is that pregnant women are very sensitive to smells and oils with strong scents cause nausea. Another is that some oils have caused miscarriage problems.
- c. Often times bolsters and pillows are used to help a pregnant woman stay comfortable during the massage.

XI. Pictures

- a. Here you can see the physical changes of the body as the growing baby takes up more room
- b. This illustrates pillows placed for a pregnant woman to lie in the prone position.
- c. Two pregnant women receiving massage in the supine position.
- d. Two pregnant woman as they receive massages in the recommended side-lying position.

XI. Target Market

- a. Expectant mothers

Where to learn

Most massage schools that offer the 1000 hour course also teach prenatal massage. There are a few places that do continuing education that includes course work in this field as well. The short list here are simply the first ones I pulled from websites:

- **International Professional School of Bodywork**
Phone : (858) 748-8827 Toll Free: (800) 586-8322 Fax: (858) 748-8827
Body Therapy Associates 11650 Iberia Place #137 San Diego, CA 92128
<http://www.bodytherapyassociates.com/index.php>
- **Alive & Well! Institute of Conscious Bodywork**
Phone: (415) 258-0402 Toll Free: (888) 259-5961 Fax: (415)-258-0635
100 Shaw Drive San Anselmo, CA 9496
- **Charleston School of Massage**
<http://www.charlestonmassage.com>
- **The National Academy of Massage Therapy and Healing Sciences**
Phone: (215) 412-4121 Fax: (215) 412-4123
P.O. Box 1470 Kulpsville, PA. 19443
www.nationalmassage.com
- **Desert Institute of the Healing Arts**
Phone: (520) 882-0899 Toll Free: (800) 733-8098
639 North Sixth Avenue Tucson, AZ 85705
www.DesertInstitute.org

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