

Massage Therapy in the Childbearing Year: Patient Information

The childbearing year is a time of major structural, physiological, psychological, spiritual, and social changes. Some of these changes produce discomforts and concerns which can be addressed with appropriate massage therapy care.

Preconception massage therapy can potentially:

- Enhance the health & functioning of the pelvic & abdominal organs, promoting fertility
- Improve mental, emotional, & physical wellbeing
- Detoxify, balance, & relax the woman's body, making it an ideal environment for conception

Pregnancy massage therapy can potentially:

- Relieve head/neck/backaches & sore feet, muscle cramps/spasms, sciatica & carpal tunnel pain
- Reduce stress on weight-bearing joints
- Increase flexibility/pliability of muscles & skin
- Improve digestion, relieving constipation & gas
- Strengthen immune system function
- Improve blood/lymph circulation, eliminating toxins
- Reduce swelling (edema) & varicose veins
- Reduce fatigue, stress, anxiety & depression
- Encourage deeper sleeps for longer periods
- Improve breathing patterns
- Stabilize hormone levels & stimulate the release of endorphins (natural pain killers) & oxytocin (which causes relaxation & a mild euphoric state)
- Improve the health & development of baby
- Help prepare a woman's body & mind for childbirth

Taking labour preparation & support lessons through your RMT can:

- Help you learn how to create an ideal atmosphere for your birth experience, as well as how to obtain the information you need about childbirth
- Teach you simple exercises, stretches, & comfort measures to reduce stress & complications before & during childbirth
- Teach your birthing partner ways to help you during labour, including how to provide massage
- Help you understand how to take care of *yourself* when you are busy with your newborn

Postpartum massage therapy can potentially:

- Speed restoration of the body to its pre-pregnancy state & encourage involution (uterine shrinkage)
- Ease muscle strain & fatigue from labour exertions
- Help eliminate excess fluids held within body tissues
- Help to normalize the abdominal skin & connective tissues & help stimulate abdominal muscle tone
- Improve circulation & relieve congestion in organs cramped & displaced during pregnancy
- Rebalance & realign pelvic & spinal structures
- Reduce muscle & joint imbalances caused by common aspects of baby care
- Encourage proper tissue healing & digestive tract functioning (peristalsis) after a cesarean birth

Conditions that would contraindicate massage therapy:

- Unexplained, continual abdominal pains
- Chill & fever over 100 degrees F
- Noticeable decrease in fetal movements
- Persistent & severe nausea or vomiting
- Increasing blood pressure
- Full body or very sudden swelling (systemic edema)
- Persistent & severe headaches
- Dizziness or visual disturbances
- Excessive discharge or vaginal bleeding
- Excessive hunger or thirst with reduced urination
- Frequent burning urination
- Redness, heat, & pain in legs

High Risk Pregnancies:

- Young or old maternal age
- Previous problem pregnancy
- Three or more consecutive spontaneous abortions
- Multiple gestation
- Maternal illnesses: diabetes mellitus, chronic high blood pressure, chronic asthma, cardiac/renal/connective tissue/liver disorders
- RH or other genetic problems or uterine abnormalities
- Drug or other hazardous material exposure

Massage therapy is an appropriate form of care throughout the preconception period, the full nine months of pregnancy, labour, and the early and late postpartum periods.

If you are experiencing ANY of the above listed conditions that would contraindicate massage therapy or are considered a high risk pregnancy, it is inadvisable for you to receive massage therapy until your physician or maternity healthcare provider has given his/her approval – please have a release form signed.

Postpartum massage therapy can begin as soon as 24 hours post-delivery as long as you have discussed receiving massage therapy with your physician or maternity healthcare provider. If there are complications with the birth that leave your health compromised you must have a release form signed.

If you would like to receive maternity massage therapy care, please read and sign the Maternity Massage Therapy Intake Form and submit it (along with a Healthcare Provide Release form if necessary) at your upcoming appointment.