

Touch

Did you know that a mother's chest can rise or fall in temperature by 1 - 2 degrees to regulate her child's temperature, when they are skin to skin? Or that skin to skin contact promotes regular heartbeat, reduces the flow of stress hormones, supports the immune system and helps to stabilise digestion?

Touch is like food. It promotes the flow of growth hormones and love hormones (like oxytocin) and even switches on genes for the growth of new brain cells.

Touch is reassuring. Loving touch feels good, and boosts activity in the brain to promote bonding. It reduces separation anxiety and is a wonderful pain reliever. Every baby needs touch: it's vital for development; and it's a natural extension of time in the womb.

It's also great for mum and dad. When you hold your baby skin-to-skin, your own body systems are stabilised, your levels of love hormones rise and stress reduces. With a sling or specially designed baby-wearing vest, you can enjoy skin-to-skin contact through the day; and at night, by sleeping with your baby, you can continue this.

On our courses we show you how to bring touch and massage into daily life, right from the very start. We have been guided by [Peter Walker](#), one of the world's most experienced and admired teachers of baby massage, who has worked closely with Yehudi Gordon, and joined Babiesknow Weekends in 2005 and 2006. We also explore the concept of 'KMC' or '[Kangaroo Mother Care](#)' as pioneered by Nils Bergman, and the physiological benefits of touch for babies.

Massage

Massage for your baby begins in the womb and continues each time you hold or stroke her. You can massage your baby while she lies on your chest, and as she grows you and she may enjoy an evolving routine of soothing and developmental massage techniques. We'll give you some basic guidance to get you started, and hope you'll continue to enjoy massage, and/or learn more through a course that's local to you.

Lack of touch - chilling tales

Frederick II, a thirteenth century Holy Roman emperor and king of southern Italy unwittingly conducted the first study of human bonding and the importance of touch. He spoke several languages and wanted to discover the inborn language of mankind by raising a group of children who would never hear speech. The children were cared for by foster mothers and nurses who

were allowed to suckle and bathe the children but not to interact with them at any other time. All the babies died before uttering a single word.

Seven hundred years later, a similar tragic fate befell another group of babies. In the 1940s, with the emergence of the 'new' theory that disease is spread by contact, psychoanalyst Rene Spitz gathered a group of babies from orphanages, as well as other who had been separated from their mothers who were in prison, to conduct an experiment to see whether reduced human contact could reduce the incidence of disease. The babies were fed and clothed, and kept warm and clean but they were not played with, handled, or held. Spitz thought that human contact would risk exposing the children to hazardous infectious organisms. But what happened was that while the physical needs of the children were met, they became withdrawn and sickly, and lost weight. A great many died. In tragic irony, the babies exhibited a vast number of infections. In one institution the mortality rate to measles was 40% compared to the national average was 0.5% ... and in the cleanest and most sterile institutions the death rate was above 75%. Spitz had rediscovered that a lack of human contact and interaction is fatal to infants. We need touch, just as we need love.