

# Massage and Touch



An activity guide for under-fives



**SPORT  
NEW ZEALAND**

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[www.sportnz.org.nz](http://www.sportnz.org.nz)



## What is Active Movement/ Koringa Hihiko?



Active Movement is just as important for newborns as it is for older children. By helping your child to get active, you help their body to develop, you help them to learn and to feel safe, and you show them they are loved.

The Active Movement series of brochures helps you with ideas for fun activities.





## ? Why is massage good for you and your child?

It is a lovely way to relax with a baby or young child.

It helps our children to feel welcome, loved and respected.

**Massage is good for you and your infant or young child.**

It is beneficial for children of all ages, not just for infants.



It soothes, relaxes and calms both of you, while also helping her brain and sensory system.



It strengthens the muscles.

## ? How do infants learn from touch?

- 😊 Touch is an infant's strongest sense and the one he learns the most from.
- Sensory receptors in the skin send messages to the brain, helping it grow and make new connections.
  - The most sensitive receptors are in the mouth. By putting everything in her mouth, she learns about size, shape and texture.
  - Touch helps him learn how his body fits together, what everything is called, how big it is and how it fits within a space.
- 😊 When you touch her bare feet, she learns where her toes are.
- 😊 When he chews on his toes, he is learning that the toes belong to him.

## ? What should I do when I massage my child?

- 😊 **When massaging ensure that:**
- you have a warm room, warm hands and a warm child
  - she is lying on a soft, comfortable surface
  - you use raindrop movements down his body to his fingertips and toes
  - you roll her over and massage her back
  - one hand is always touching your child. Try to make the massage seamless.



## ? What should I do when I massage my child? (continued)

### 😊 Massaging techniques

- Stroke down the body and out along the arms (seamlessly).
- Work your thumb down her body in circles.
- Use raindrop movements down his body to his fingertips and toes.
- Use different materials on her skin and talk about the different feelings e.g. this one feels rough, this is prickly, this is smooth.
- Gently squeeze down the body and along the arms and legs (remember her fingers and toes).

## ? What do I need to know before I start?

- 😊 All activities are for boys **and** girls.
- 😊 It is the **order** in which they gain body skills that is important, not **the age** that they gain them.
- 😊 Remember, when children are active, stay around them to **keep them safe.**

# Activities for Newborns and Infants

## He ngohe mā ngā Pēpi



These activities can also be done with toddlers and young children.



Sometimes it's nice to move up the body.

**Massage makes me feel calm and helps me know that I am loved. I learn about my body.**





- Tell a story while you massage. You could make up a story that is based on what you're doing. For example, gently tap your fingers on her skin like raindrops while making up a story about them.



- You can also sing gently to him. He will think you have a wonderful voice!

- Make a massage box to use at 'touching time'. It could include:
  - a scarf
  - ribbons
  - soft fabric
  - coloured string to gently pull between the fingers and toes
  - wool
  - a rubber ball
  - a koosh ball
  - a cardboard cylinder to roll on the skin
  - a straw to blow on the skin
  - feathers.

# Activities for Toddlers

## He ngohe mā ngā Tamariki Nohinohi



These activities can also be done with young children.



Don't forget about feet! Children love feeling different surfaces. Walking with bare feet over sand, autumn leaves and other surfaces is a fun feeling.

**I learn where my  
fingers and hands  
are and what they  
can do.**



- ▶ Water play. Always stay with your child when they are near water.



- ▶ Finger painting. You could even try this outside, placing paper on the ground and paint with the feet!

- ▶ Playing with sand – in a tray, a sandpit or at the beach.



- ▶ Play dough, slime and other gooey (safe) substances.

# Activities for Young Children

## He ngohe mā ngā Kōhungahunga



These activities can also be done with toddlers.

**I learn what my  
fingers and hands  
can do.**





▶ Gardening and playing in the dirt.



▶ Baking. You could then take your baking to the park for a picnic!



▶ Clay and plasticine.

▶ Gluing, papier mâché and collage.

# ? Where do I go for more information?

😊 This brochure is one of a series of 16 Active Movement resources:



**Acknowledgements** SPARC (Sport and Recreation New Zealand) express their sincere appreciation to the people and organisations who have contributed both directly and indirectly to this Active Movement resource.



Further information can be found on the SPARC website or call 0800 ACTIVE (0800 22 84 83).

[www.sparc.org.nz](http://www.sparc.org.nz)

