



STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO PREGNANCY AND LABOUR MASSAGE

Written by
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VitalTouch
FEEL LIFE





“POSITIVE TOUCH COMMUNICATES
LOVE AND SUPPORT
IN PREGNANCY AND LABOUR”
Katie Whitehouse

This booklet is an easy to follow **STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE** to using simple massage and positive touch in pregnancy and labour.

It has been written by **KATIE WHITEHOUSE**, expert Massage Therapist and Pregnancy and Labour Massage Instructor.

Katie has brought touch into the lives of many parents-to-be through her writing and her own classes.

Katie is the founder of **VITAL TOUCH**, who make the **NATALIA** natural products collection: created to support you through your journey from pregnancy to parenthood. Completely natural, nourishing and extremely gentle for you and your baby.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE TOUCH

Positive touch is vital for our wellbeing. Whether we are a baby, a mother, a child, a middle aged man or an elderly woman - we all need touch to thrive.

Of all our senses – touch is, in a way, the greatest. Our skin is actually the largest organ in our body, yet it is often taken for granted. The benefits of touch, although now well researched, are largely ignored.

This is partly because our basic need for touch is, ironically, intangible: when we need a drink we feel thirsty, when we need food we feel hungry... but if the need for touch is not satisfied the consequences of this are less obvious and so they are easily overlooked. However the consequences of long term touch deprivation are actually profound.

WHEN WE ARE TOUCH DEPRIVED:

WE MAY EXPERIENCE:

- INSOMNIA
- DEPRESSION
- AGGRESSIVE FEELINGS
- LOW SELF ESTEEM
- INCREASED STRESS HORMONES
- ISOLATION
- HYPERACTIVITY

WHEN WE ARE TOUCHED POSITIVELY:

WE MAY EXPERIENCE:

- BETTER SLEEP PATTERNS
- STIMULATION OF ENDORPHINS
- FEELINGS OF WELL BEING
- INCREASED SELF ESTEEM
- RELAXATION
- ABILITY TO RELATE TO OTHERS
- REDUCED PAIN



**FROM 5 WEEKS**

YOUR BABY IS RESPONSIVE TO TOUCH

FROM 7 WEEKS

YOUR BABY CAN HEAR YOU

BY 20 WEEKS

YOU MAY FEEL THE BABY MOVING IN
RESPONSE TO YOUR GENTLE TOUCH
AND THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE

MASSAGING IN PREGNANCY AND LABOUR: POSITIVE SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

Your relationship with your baby begins long before they are born. By using positive touch during pregnancy you and your partner are sowing the seeds for greater connection with your baby after they are born.

There is well documented evidence of how relaxation when you are pregnant benefits you and your baby – massage is the perfect way to achieve this.

Using massage in labour involves the father or birth partner in a supportive and positive way. The simple strokes in this booklet are relaxing and relieving.



BENEFITS OF MASSAGE DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is a critical time of transition for a couple. There are so many changes going on: physical, emotional, financial ... using massage throughout pregnancy is a simple way of helping all parties:

- it relaxes you both
- it is a way for you both to communicate and connect with your unborn baby
 - both father and mother can feel more positively connected with the mother's changing body
 - the father can feel more included in the pregnancy
- if practiced during pregnancy massage is also likely to be useful in labour

BENEFITS OF MASSAGE DURING LABOUR

- it relaxes you both
- it can help create a pleasant atmosphere in the birthing room
- it stimulates endorphins – the body's natural opiates
- it communicates love, support and reassurance (non-verbally - labour is no time for in-depth discussion!)
- gives confidence to the father
- can help with conservation of energy and recovery between contractions
- helps to provide relief from the pain and intensity of contractions.

THE BEST MASSAGE OIL TO USE

Your skin absorbs up to 60% of what you put on it – purity and nourishment are really important when choosing what to use, especially when you are pregnant: your skin is under stress and you need to consider your baby too!

FOR PREGNANCY MASSAGE

NATALIA PRENATAL BODY & BATH OIL is cold pressed organic sunflower and rich avocado oil with an appropriate dilution of organic roman chamomile, lavender and sweet orange to relax and warm tense muscles and relieve stress.

FOR LABOUR MASSAGE

NATALIA LABOUR MASSAGE OIL is organic sunflower oil with a supportive blend of clary sage, jasmine and uplifting bergamot.

For a non aromatic oil – choose from the **VITAL TOUCH** range of pure and organic base oils: WWW.VITALTOUCH.COM



PURITY

QUALITY

INTEGRITY

WHEN NOT TO MASSAGE

Gentle massage is very safe, but there are times when it may be uncomfortable for you to receive massage:

- if you have a fever or feel at all unwell
- directly over skin that has sores, cuts, burns, inflammation or infectious rashes.
- directly after a large meal.

If you are in any doubt whatsoever, consult your GP or midwife.

WHEN TO MASSAGE

You can massage any time – but the best times are when you know you can let go a bit and forget about the day and outside pressures.



NOTE:

Massage should be soothing and NEVER painful. If it is uncomfortable stop straight away.

**MOST IMPORTANT:**

Always ask permission to massage.

GETTING STARTED

0-16 WEEKS

Getting to grips with the fact that your baby really is growing inside you is a big thing. Simply spending some time sitting together – father behind mother with hands overlapping over the mother's lower tummy can be a good way of beginning to tune in and spending some time being together (all 3 of you). Keep your hands still.

Talking and singing or playing soothing music can be part of this.

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

Massage is good for you both – mother and father!

Spend 5 minutes each, gently massaging each other's scalp, shoulders and neck. Use soothing strokes to calm and gentle squeezing to ease tension.

A gentle foot massage is also very relaxing especially at the end of a fraught day.

MASSAGE IN THE SECOND TRIMESTER

WEEKS 16-30


Keep massaging in the same way, but you can follow these guidelines for the tummy massage as your baby grows:

TUMMY MASSAGE: Stroking over the tummy should be slow and very gentle. Use some oil and skin to skin contact.

TRY: Big slow circular movements over the whole belly.

Slow long strokes from under the rib cage down towards the hips and groin.

REMEMBER this is a chance for you both to tune in with your baby.



"MASSAGE CAN HELP THE FATHER TO FEEL MORE CONNECTION WITH HIS GROWING BABY." Katie Whitehouse



MASSAGE IN THE THIRD TRIMESTER AND PRACTISING FOR LABOUR

WEEKS 30-40

Now you can start practicing massage techniques which will not only help relieve some of the tensions of later pregnancy, but can also be really useful for labour itself – helping the mother relax and relieving discomfort.

POSITIONS

The ideal is to find a position where the mother's shoulders are in front of her hips. This is a great position to encourage good positioning of your baby in the last trimester and also the best position for labour. It is also important to be able to move your hips and your shoulders.

TRY THESE POSITIONS

- on all fours
- standing and leaning forward onto back of chair
- sitting on a birthing ball
- kneeling
- leaning forward flopped onto pillows or bed



NOTE:

If you tire of one position move to another - try and keep upright and mobile in early labour.



SOOTHING STROKES

DURING PREGNANCY

These strokes are soothing and comforting.

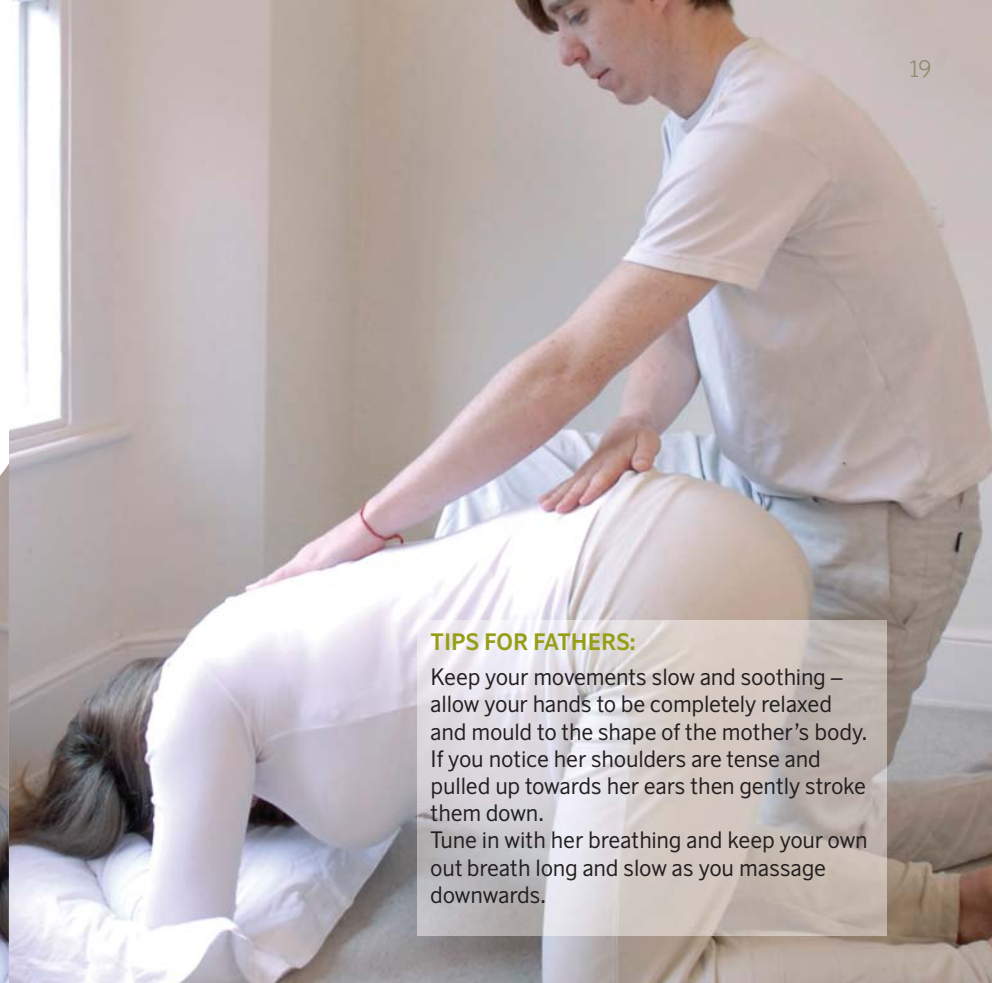
DURING LABOUR

These strokes are ideal between contractions helping the mother recover and get some energy for the next contraction.

1. WATERFALL

Start slowly, stroking with one relaxed hand from the nape of the neck all the way down to the base of the spine. Keep repeating with alternate hands so that there is a long, continuous, flowing movement.

IN THESE PHOTOS KATIE IS CLOTHED, BUT WHEN YOU PRACTICE AND IN LABOUR ITSELF DO USE OIL AND SKIN TO SKIN CONTACT.



TIPS FOR FATHERS:

Keep your movements slow and soothing – allow your hands to be completely relaxed and mould to the shape of the mother's body. If you notice her shoulders are tense and pulled up towards her ears then gently stroke them down.

Tune in with her breathing and keep your own out breath long and slow as you massage downwards.



SOOTHING STROKES

2. HEARTS

Use both hands – start with hands between the shoulder blades and then stroke up and out over the shoulders. Bring hands towards each other so that they meet at the base of the spine before stroking up and over the shoulders again. This movement traces a heart shape on the mother's back. The heart shape communicates love and support.



TIPS FOR FATHERS:

You will need to practice these techniques in the last trimester of pregnancy in order for them to be useful in labour. Encourage lots of feedback as to what the mother wants in terms of favourite technique and amount of pressure.

You need to build up a language of non-verbal communication (e.g. if she wants more pressure she pushes her body into your hand further; a raised hand means stop etc) as in labour itself conversation is inappropriate and disruptive.

Techniques need to be firm but should be relieving, NOT painful.



FIRMER STROKES

DURING PREGNANCY

These strokes help with muscle tension

DURING LABOUR

These strokes are pain relieving during contractions – you need to apply them wherever contractions are felt, which could be lower back, tops of legs/groin, or tummy.

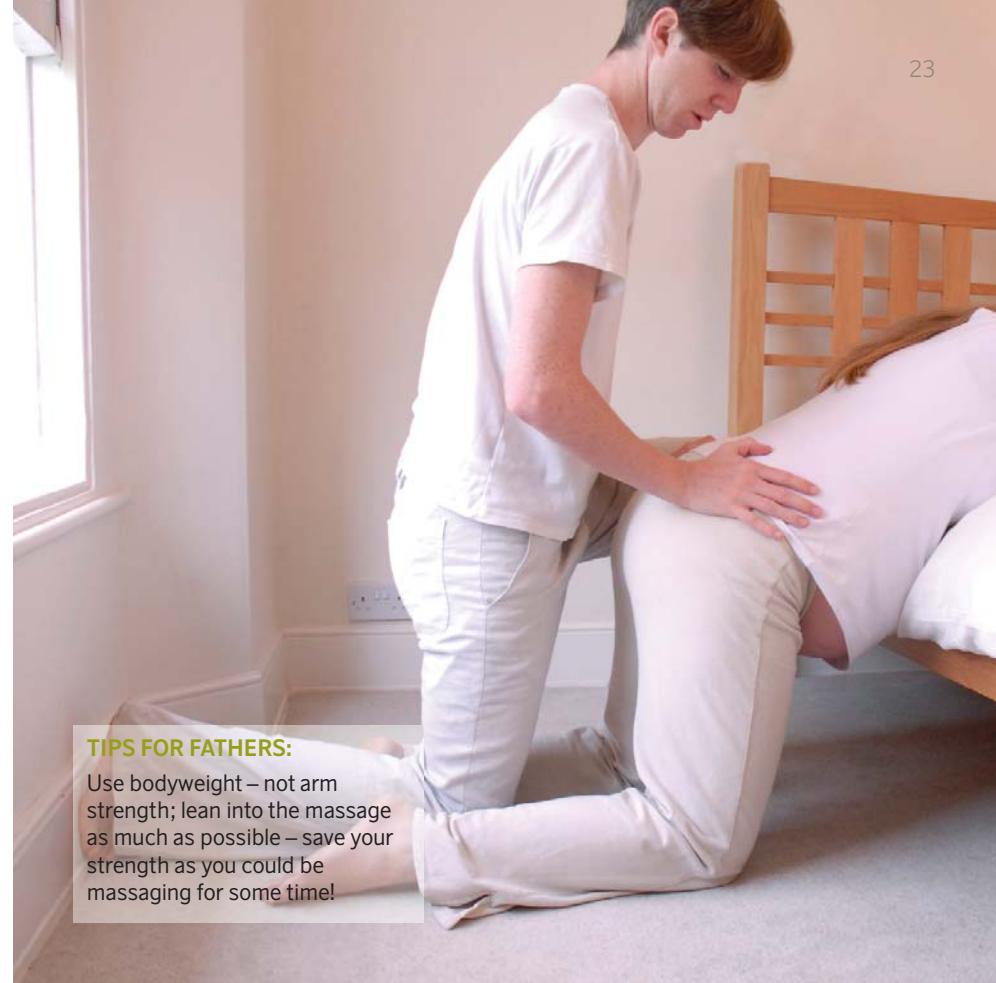
LOWER BACK MASSAGE

The lower back muscles are under great stress towards the end of pregnancy so massaging them can give great relief from muscle tension.

In labour, contractions may well be felt in the lower back/sacrum (the flat bone at the base of the spine) and firm massage here can be very relieving.

1. SACRAL CIRCLES

Use the heel of one or both hands to apply firm pressure to the sacrum (this is the flat bone at the base of the spine). Use plenty of bodyweight behind this one, and move hand/hands round in a circular or figure of eight movement while maintaining the pressure.



TIPS FOR FATHERS:

Use bodyweight – not arm strength; lean into the massage as much as possible – save your strength as you could be massaging for some time!



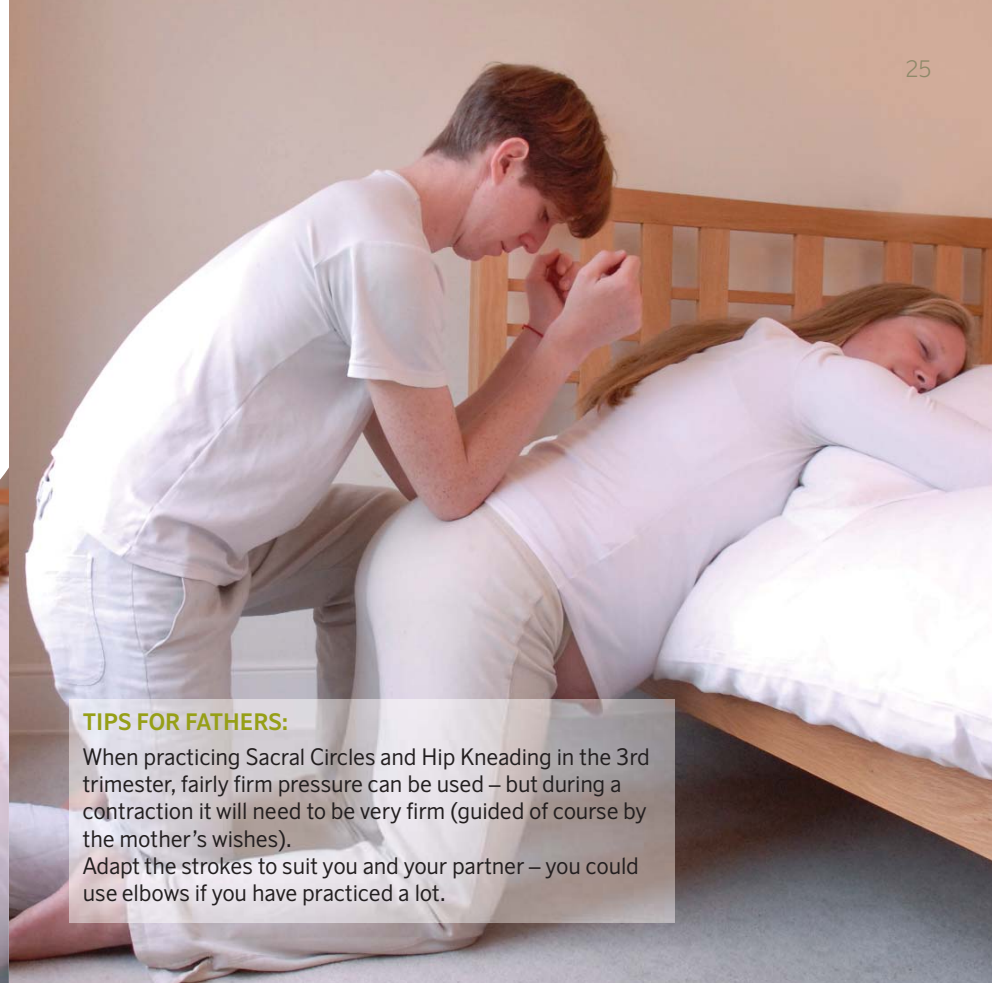
FIRMER STROKES

2. HIP KNEADING

Make a fist with each hand and use to knead deeply into the buttock muscles with the flat part of your fists (or use the heels of your hands). Lean in and allow the pressure to sink through your fists into the muscles. As the contraction intensifies, your fists can be turned backwards and forwards, while leaning in further. This will make the technique deeper and more relieving. You can try working deeply into different areas of the buttock muscles. Be guided by the mother as to the most relieving areas for her, as this will vary from woman to woman.



IN THESE PHOTOS KATIE IS CLOTHED, BUT WHEN YOU PRACTICE AND IN LABOUR ITSELF DO USE OIL AND SKIN TO SKIN CONTACT.



TIPS FOR FATHERS:

When practicing Sacral Circles and Hip Kneading in the 3rd trimester, fairly firm pressure can be used – but during a contraction it will need to be very firm (guided of course by the mother's wishes).

Adapt the strokes to suit you and your partner – you could use elbows if you have practiced a lot.



3. TOPS OF LEGS

Use the heels of your hands to sink into the top of the legs – maintain the pressure as you slide your hands down the legs – breathing out.



TUMMY

DURING PREGNANCY

Practice this gently

DURING LABOUR

During a contraction you can apply more pressure as you slide your hands apart.

Start with your hands together under the mother's bump. As she breathes out, slide your hands gently but firmly out towards her sides. Slide your hands in to meet at the centre of her tummy and then slide them back down to the starting point as she breathes in again and repeat as necessary throughout the contraction.





OTHER IDEAS AND TIPS

Whilst it is best to keep shoulders in front of hips during pregnancy and upright and mobile in labour, there may be times when you need to rest.

Try a sidelying position with your uppermost leg bent and supported on pillows. It has been found that lying on your left side is ideal for foetal positioning (i.e. to help your baby move into the best position for birth).

FOOT AND HAND MASSAGE

If the mother needs to be monitored, or has an epidural, a foot, hand or shoulder massage can be very reassuring.

The most important thing is that the mother is comfortable and as relaxed as possible.

Massage can help bring some of your home environment into a labour room in a hospital – especially if you have practiced!





TIPS FOR STAGE ONE

This stage begins with regular contractions, building up in strength, duration, frequency and getting closer together as your cervix dilates from 0-10 cm to allow your baby's head to pass through into the birth canal.

The following may be helpful:

- using massage for relaxation and to ease discomfort
- staying upright and mobile with shoulders in front of hips
- keeping your hips moving
- being held and supported
- deep warm baths (once labour is established)
- breathing – focus on your out breath during contractions – make it long and drawn out

Listen to and trust your instincts. Move into the position that feels right for you and change position as you feel necessary – make any noises that feel helpful to you.

ABOVE ALL keep an open mind and try and stay as calm as possible.

TIPS FOR TRANSITION

This is when the cervix is almost fully dilated and you are building up to stage two (the actual birth). You may feel a sudden change of mood, or a state of altered being; possibly a need to be left alone.

You may find the following helpful:

- inhaling **NATALIA INSTANT ENERGISER**
- kneeling or leaning forward (see page 17)
- sips of water
- cool water on a flannel to mop your brow
- making long, drawn out noises
- focusing on your slow outbreath
- sacral circles (see page 22)

ONCE YOUR BABY IS BORN

Try to have prolonged skin to skin contact with your baby as soon as possible after they are born.



BRINGING TOUCH INTO EVERYDAY LIFE

We live in a touch deprived and busy world. Whether we were massaged as babies or not, and whether or not we massaged our own babies ... in my experience it is never too late to start.

It can be very simple to bring massage and positive touch into our everyday lives. With the clear boundary that touch must always be wanted and that we should be able to say no to unwanted touch, I believe that a profound difference could be made very simply.

As well as massaging your baby you could also try:

- Offering someone you know who is elderly and possibly rarely touched (maybe your own parent or grandparent) a hand massage next time you visit. It is unintrusive but really relaxing and easy to carry on talking while you do it.
- Offering your children a very gentle soothing back massage before they go to sleep. Simply stroke downwards from head/neck to the base of their spine. You can do this over their pyjamas so they are able to stay relaxed and drop off to sleep.
- Offering your partner a 5 minute neck and shoulder massage this evening.

VITAL TOUCH THANK YOU

A big thank you to the brilliant and well massaged mums and dads to be who took part in the making of this booklet:

Harry who massaged Katie who gave birth to Sophia
Cath who gave birth to Evan
Dave who massaged Jeannett who gave birth to Felix

Do try this at home !

Katie Whitelance

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VITAL TOUCH NATALIA

NATALIA products are 100% natural, packed with gorgeous organic ingredients and handblended with care in Devon, UK. **NATALIA** has been tested and approved by experts as well as tried and loved by real parents for many years.

NATALIA natural products invite you to bring the benefits of relaxation, positive touch and pure natural plant ingredients into your whole pregnancy, birth and parenting experience.

We have a strict buying policy, endeavouring to find sources which preserve and support the environment. We incorporate organic, wild-crafted and sustainably grown plant material and seek out fair-trade suppliers.

In addition all **NATALIA** products are cruelty-free and biodegradable, using no animal ingredients, no SLS or parabens, no artificial scents or colours.

NATALIA PRODUCTS

NATALIA prenatal, labour and baby products are available individually and in wonderfully supportive gift sets. To see the full range and stockist information visit our website: WWW.VITALTOUCH.COM or call us on +44 (0)1364 644781



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