

Preterm Infants Show Reduced Stress Behaviors and Activity after 5 days of Massage Therapy

Maria Hernandez-Reif,¹ Miguel Diego,¹ and Tiffany Field^{1,2}

¹Touch Research Institute, University of Miami School of Medicine

²Fielding Graduate University

Abstract

Preterm infants residing in an NICU were randomly assigned to a massage therapy or to a control group. The preterm infants in the massage therapy group received three 15 minute massages each day for 5 consecutive days, with the massages consisting of moderate pressure stroking to the head, shoulders, back, arms and legs and kinesthetic exercises consisting of flexion and extension of the limbs. Infant stress behaviors and activity were recorded on the first and last day of the study.

Preterm infants receiving massage therapy showed fewer stress behaviors and less activity from the first to the last day of the study. The findings suggest that massage has pacifying or stress reducing effects on preterm infants, which is noteworthy given that they experience numerous stressors during their hospitalization.

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Universal Health Institute

8 W Chestnut

Chicago, IL 60610

312.266.9090

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