

## Vaccinations and Baby Massage

It is important as an infant massage teacher to empower parents by not presenting yourself in the infant massage class as 'the expert'. However, it is necessary to have an understanding of anatomy and physiology and anything that will have a direct influence on the body (such as vaccinations) and give advice to parents accordingly during classes. I have often been asked my advice about whether or not vaccinations should be given. I have my own views on this subject, but I can honestly say that in all the years I have been teaching I have never aired that opinion. I have reflected the question back and asked the parent what they feel about it; I have directed them to the appropriate health professionals and I have given them details of books that might be helpful. I do, however, give advice about how long to avoid massage after a baby has been vaccinated.

Vaccinations necessarily have an impact as vaccines trigger the immune system to produce antibodies in a similar manner to that of the actual disease. When running classes, I suggest to the parents, that it is wise to allow at least 3 days after their babies have been immunised before recommencing the massage routine again; because massage is stimulating and has a direct effect on all body systems, including the immune system. It is necessary to have a break from massage, so that the baby's body is not overloaded/over stimulated whilst it is trying to deal with the vaccinations given.

Until quite recently the 'killed' vaccines for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hib were administered via an injection and the 'live' polio vaccine was given orally at the same time. However this has now changed and there is a new 'five in one' injection that incorporates a 'killed' polio vaccine too. Although the potential of a reaction to a 'live' vaccine is a much longer period of time, there is still the potential for a reaction to a 'killed' vaccine to occur within a 72 hour period after it has been administered (Sussman & Sussman 2003).

Therefore it is advisable to suggest to parents that they avoid massage for at least 3 days after the injection has been given. After all, if there is the potential of a reaction then the baby's immune system must necessarily still be dealing with the effects of the vaccination. After three days massage may recommence as long as the injection site is avoided until all bruising has subsided.

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Connections Volume 1 Issue 10 Summer 2005

References:

Sussman, W. & Sussman, L. (2003) **Vaccinations: Yes or No?** The Merrydown Publishing Company Ltd. Isle of Wight

[www.medic8.com/healthguide/articles/5-in-1jab.html](http://www.medic8.com/healthguide/articles/5-in-1jab.html)