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Demand For Massage Therapists Increases As Interest In Benefits Of Massage Creates More Converts

By Terry McDermott

Projections by the U.S. Department of Labor forecast employment opportunities for massage therapists to grow by 18 to 26 percent from 2004–2014.

According to the 2006–2007 Edition of the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the outlook for employment for massage therapists will "increase faster than average" during the period from 2004–2014. The Bureau defines "faster than average" as "increase 18 to 26 percent."

Among the reasons for the growing demand for massage therapists, the publication cites "massage therapy's growing acceptance as a medical tool." Apparently, younger Americans appreciate the effectiveness of massage at reducing stress through relaxation and the growing segment of older Americans are experiencing specific therapeutic benefits. The willingness of the "medical provider and insurance industries" to recommend and cover the costs of massage therapy is another growth factor cited by the Bureau.

There are roughly 1,300 massage therapy postsecondary schools, college programs, and training programs throughout the country. After enrolling in a training program, massage therapy students study anatomy, physiology, kinesiology and other subjects covering the structure and function of the human body. Students must understand how the body works and moves and how the various systems relate and interact. Students also train in the various massage types, or "modalities," and learn the techniques associated with each form of massage offered by the training institution. There are dozens of unique approaches to massage ranging from techniques that focus on a specific area of the body to techniques that approach the body holistically and consider both physical and mental aspects of health and relaxation.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that massage therapists held about 97,000 jobs in 2004. Most massage therapists are self-employed and own their own business. The balance are independent contractors or are employed by businesses that offer massage services. These include spas, health

clubs, medical offices and sports organizations.

An aging population and broader acceptance of alternative medical practices will only increase the demand for massage therapists. Baby-boomers will carry their appreciation for message into their senior years and the elderly, in general, are recognizing the benefits of massage as a support for a more active lifestyle. Businesses have begun offering on-site massage to employees to help deal with on-the-job stress and help improve productivity. Health insurance companies are recognizing the contribution of massage to overall health and many are including massage in their coverage.

The outlook is bright for existing and potential massage therapists. The occupation offers a great deal of flexibility and an opportunity to operate independently. Income levels are fair and growing and the social aspects are quite attractive to those who enjoy helping and interacting with many different people. Enrollment in massage schools is on the rise and good schools, ambitious students and increased demand bode well for future massage therapists.

J. Terrence McDermott is the administrator of Massage Schools Guide at

<http://www.massageschoolsguide.com>

, a website offering resources for prospective massage

therapists. He specializes in online continuing education resources and also administers Access Online Degrees at

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The Benefits Of Infant Massage

By Anne Morris

Most mothers instinctively lovingly massage their babies. Perhaps it was by understanding this and observing the effect upon the infant that the idea of infant massage was born. Actually infant massage has been in practice for many years. But recently its popularity has taken off worldwide. It should really come as no surprise since both babies and parents enjoy the benefits. Let's take a look at some of the benefits of infant massage below:

Infant Massage Facilitates Bonding

Touch between mother and baby is extremely important during the early months in order to develop the bond that will help the baby thrive and grow into a happy well adjusted child. The mother and father are able to provide gentle nurturing touches which the baby associates with love and being cared for. Infant massage helps the baby and parents get to know one another and spend quiet quality time

together, communicating through touch.

Infant Massage Relaxes the Infant

A newborn baby's life is pretty stressful when you think about it. He gets hungry and cold and the only way he can let anyone know he needs attention is to yell for it. Infant massage can help relax a stressed out baby that has just had too much activity or is suffering from stomach upsets. When infant massage is part of the baby's normal routine, there is a good chance he will grow into a child who knows what relaxation is and how to achieve it to escape the stresses of life.

Infant Massage Improves Baby's Sleep

It follows that a baby lulled into relaxation by an infant massage will quickly succumb to slumber. The upside is that infant massage may help to promote sounder and longer sleep periods. Parents will also benefit from a soundly sleeping baby which will give them much needed rest also.

Infant Massage Supports Communication

Infant massage opens up a new channel for communication among baby and parents. Parents will learn to pick up on nonverbal cues from the baby. The infant will grow to feel as if he is being heard and attended to without having to clamor for it.

Infant Massage Relieves Discomfort

Studies indicate that infant massage releases endorphins and oxytocin into the baby's body. These elements may act to relieve the common discomforts a baby struggles with such as teething, stress, congestion, and colic. Watch any mother trying to comfort an unhappy baby as massage, rubbing, and patting just come naturally. The movements help to settle the child, relax him, and alleviate his discomfort.

Infant Massage is Fun

What better reason could there be for infant massage other than the simple fact that the baby and parents think it is fun? It is a great way to get some giggles and coos from the baby and have an enjoyable time together.

So given the above benefits, it is no wonder that infant massage is so popular. Of course mothers have been massaging their babies since the beginning of time, but when we speak of the formal infant massage you should know there is actually a method to follow. Certain types of movements act to calm and relax the baby before bedtime and other types of movements will energize him. Still other types of massage movements act to relieve discomfort. So if you would like to learn formal massage for your baby and experience the benefits above, ask around and see if you can find a local infant massage class that you and your baby can attend together.

Anne Morris is an established freelance writer. You can find more of her writings at

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<http://www.baby-today.com>

and

<http://www.massage-wire.com>



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