Pregnancy Massage, Cottage Comfort

a gentle guide for feeling at ease in a changing body

A quiet companion for good conversations with your own OB or midwife, who knows your story. Prenatal massage, done gently and with the right support, can be a sweet way to rest, ease aches, and settle stress. **Please ask your provider before you begin**, especially if your pregnancy is being watched more closely.

What it may help

Back and leg comfort

Massage may ease back and leg pain — one of the most common reasons people seek a prenatal session (AMTA).

A calmer day

It can reduce stress and anxiety, lift mood, and help with sleep (AMTA). A quiet hour is also a kindness in itself.

Swelling, gently

Some people feel less heavy or puffy afterward when only very light strokes are used on the legs. Deep pressure is not used for swelling; mention puffy legs to your provider.

The safe position



Cottage Guide · side-lying, with pillows

The usual safest position is **lying on your side**, with pillows under your belly, between your knees, and behind your back. Later in pregnancy, the left side is often most comfortable. After about the fourth month, skip lying flat on your back. A table with a belly cut-out, so you can lie face down, is used **only if your OB or midwife says it is all right for you**. ACOG notes that side-lying is the best position, and that some tables do have a cut-out.

A prenatal-certified therapist

Choose a **licensed therapist with special prenatal training**, and say you are pregnant even if you are not showing yet (ACOG). A prenatal-certified therapist will know how to support you with pillows, how light to work, and which areas to skip. Tell them about swelling, varicose veins, pain, or any cautions from your provider. If a stroke feels too deep, say so — this should never hurt.

Pillow placement

- A pillow under your head
- A pillow supporting the bump
- A pillow between the knees
- A pillow tucked behind your back

These four pillows keep hips, belly and back comfortable, and they keep you from rolling onto your back.

Gentle pressure, and where to go lightly

Use **gentle pressure only** — light to medium, never a deep-tissue dig. Pregnancy raises the risk of blood clots in the legs, so **skip deep pressure on the legs and along the inner ankles**, and do not massage over varicose veins or use long, firm strokes from ankle to hip. Skip firm massage of the belly. A warm (not hot) pack on the lower back can feel lovely. If anything hurts, ask the therapist to lighten or stop.

For general information; ask your own OB or midwife before you begin. Not a substitute for personal medical care.

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when to wait, partner tips, oils, and a late-pregnancy sidebar

When not to massage

- *Ask first, and skip unless your OB clears it*
  A high-risk pregnancy, preeclampsia or high blood pressure concerns, a history of blood clots, vaginal bleeding, or other complications your provider is watching.
- *Many wait until after the first trimester*
  Some providers prefer to begin prenatal massage in the second trimester. Follow the advice you are given.
- *Stop and call your provider*
  Sudden swelling, a severe headache, vision changes, chest pain, or calf pain and redness are reasons to pause and get medical advice, not to massage through them.

Partner tips, at home

You can offer a gentle cottage massage at home after your provider says it is fine. Have her lie on her side with plenty of pillows. Use slow, light strokes on the shoulders, back, and — very lightly — the feet. **Do not press deeply into the legs or inner ankles, and do not massage the belly.** Keep sessions short and sweet, and stop if anything is painful or feels odd. A kind voice and unhurried hands matter as much as technique.

A simple oil

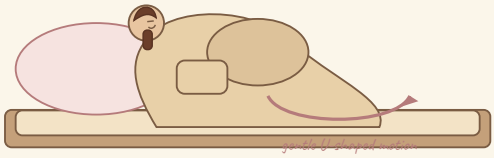
A simple **carrier oil such as jojoba** is enough. **Skip essential oils in the first trimester.** After that, and only if your OB or midwife says yes, lavender may be used well diluted — about **1% in the carrier** (roughly 6 drops in 1 ounce of jojoba). Never put essential oils neat on the skin, and never swallow them. Inhaling a single drop on a tissue is often the gentlest start (Mayo Clinic Health System). If a scent makes you queasy, set it aside.

a late-pregnancy sidebar

Perineal Massage Prep

(from about 34 weeks)

This is a **hand (digital) method only** — no devices or electric massagers. Starting in late pregnancy can reduce tears that need stitches and the chance of an episiotomy, **mainly in first vaginal births** (Cochrane; NHS). **Ask your OB or midwife before you begin.**



simple side view, fully draped

How

- Clean hands and trimmed nails.
- A water-soluble lubricant or unscented oil.
- About 5 minutes, a few times a week.
- Gentle downward and U-shaped pressure.
- Stop if there is pain.

Skip it if you have a low-lying placenta, bleeding, an infection, or a herpes outbreak. The little picture is a draped side view only — not a close or graphic drawing.

For general information; ask your own OB or midwife before you begin. Not a substitute for personal medical care.

Sources: ACOG, Can I get a massage while pregnant? (2020). AMTA, Benefits of Massage During Pregnancy. Mayo Clinic Health System, Essential oils during pregnancy (2024). Cochrane Review CD005123, Antenatal perineal massage for reducing perineal trauma. NHS patient information on antenatal perineal massage (from 34 weeks). Cleveland Clinic, Prenatal Massage, for pressure and positioning notes.

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