

New Year, New Baby, New Attitudes

Pregnancy is a major rite of passage, especially for a first-time mother as she steps into a new role in relation to herself, her world, her mate, and soon her new baby.

In many cultures throughout time, the cycle of pregnancy and birth has been revered and celebrated with ceremonies, songs, and prayer. Even ancient cultures nurtured women with touch during their pregnancy, labor and post-partum periods. It was thought that women who were touched and massaged with care during gestation would have shorter labors with fewer problems and healthier babies.

Finally, American culture is recognizing that touch during pregnancy is a beneficial treatment to help women adapt to the vast changes that are occurring in their bodies. For example, lower back pain is a common complaint. With limited options for pain relief, massage therapy is a popular alternative treatment. Massage also reduces stress and anxiety, decreases swelling in the arms and legs, and relieves aches and pains in muscles and joints. Proper positioning for the mother-to-be during the massage is of the utmost importance, and special cushioning systems are often used to insure her comfort. Less stress on the mother also means less stress for the baby. And yes, the baby definitely knows what's going on and reaps all the benefits of the massage and the effect on his (or her) mom.

Some cultures view a pregnant woman as a goddess and creator of life with a special connection to the Divine. It's considered a great honor to work with women during this time of their lives and be a part of this life process. [Dori Stephens](#) is a licensed massage therapist practicing in Naples.