

Pregnancy massage

This month, in honour of Mothers Day, we are looking at women's health and well-being. Massage, and particularly pregnancy massage offer real benefits, read on and discover how. *By Sonia Griffin.*

Everyone needs time out from the daily grind and even more so if you are pregnant or have children. So we spoke to Paula Harris of Elements Natural Therapy about massage, and pregnancy massage in particular, and the benefits they can offer.

Paula is a qualified naturopath and aromatherapist, with specialist training in pregnancy massage through the New Zealand College of Massage. She deals with busy women and men who are struggling with their work/life balance, by taking care of them, allowing them time out and leaving them more relaxed and able to cope with life's stresses.

Sound good? It gets better! Paula's particular focus is on relaxation – as her philosophy goes: "Taking care of yourself isn't a luxury!"

Massage in general has all the commonly known benefits of relieving muscle tension and stiffness, increasing circulation and reducing levels of anxiety. But lesser known is that massage can promote nourishment, repair and renewal of body cells and can reduce your blood pressure - which is something pregnant women in particular can benefit from.

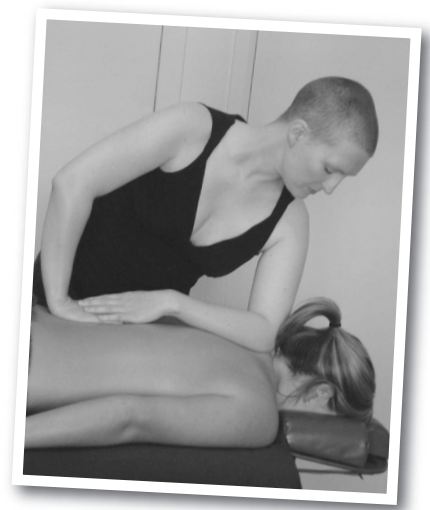
Pregnancy massage differs from a standard massage in that the focus is more in the hips/legs and back/neck/shoulders, although this depends on each woman. Hips often get sore and tight as pregnancy progresses, due to side sleeping and postural and weight changes. It helps to enhance the flow of blood and lymph, reducing fluid retention in legs, soothing nerves and maintaining the body in a good condition enabling a faster return to a normal, post partum state.

Paula has a specialist table for pregnant women. The table has a abdominal space for the belly to sit with a stretch fabric sash that wraps over the hole and is

held securely under the table. This gives a comforting secure support for the mothers tummy.

To accommodate the later stages of pregnancy, Paula also offers a side-lying massage for those who find that they have become too uncomfortable even with the extra tummy space.

Pregnancy massage is generally safe for most women, although Paula warns if there's a history of miscarriage, she would advise against massage during the first trimester, but for a healthy woman, only avoid massage in weeks 12 to 14 (the changeover



from first to second trimester is considered the time of greatest vulnerability in terms of massage).

In her home-based clinic, Paula offers a peaceful and relaxing environment. She herself is attentive and will do a consultation on your first appointment to discuss your health history, including any medical conditions, current medications, supplements, and concerns. After that all you need to do is lie back, relax, and enjoy.

The last words go to Paula, who is forever a source of wisdom "Too many women take care of themselves during pregnancy with massage, but then stop (although to be honest, not

enough women take advantage of massage during pregnancy!). It's a real pity, as massage can be so wonderfully supportive and nurturing during a big transition in your life. It is really helpful in coping with stress, anxiety and post-natal depression, and easing all the new aches from carrying a growing baby around!

It's a lot easier to take care of your baby and your family when you're taking care of yourself as well."

Elements Natural Therapy Fact File

Pregnancy massage is for 30 or 45 minutes (\$30/\$45 respectively). Massage should also be limited to 45 minutes maximum during pregnancy, due to the basal metabolic rate rising.

Other massages:

Aromatherapy massage from 30 minutes up to 2 hours (price range \$30 to \$90)

Hawaiian lomilomi massage from 30 minutes up to 1 hour 30 minutes (price range \$35 to \$75)

Pohaku hot stone massage (not suitable during pregnancy!) for 1 hour 30 minutes (\$90)

Plus **naturopathic consultations**, 30 to 45 minutes (\$35)

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