

Addressing Specific Healthcare Circumstances

The infant massage and touch therapy techniques you have learned can be very useful when adapted, customized and applied safely.

Down Syndrome

Down syndrome or trisomy 21 is a chromosomal disorder caused by the presence of all or part of an extra 21st chromosome. Often Down syndrome is associated with some impairment of cognitive ability and physical growth as well as facial appearance. Individuals with Down syndrome tend to have a lower than average cognitive ability, often ranging from mild to moderate learning disabilities. A small number have severe to profound mental disability. Those with Down Syndrome may also experience hearing loss, congenital heart disease, seizure disorders, cataracts, hypotonia & hypertonia, protruding tongue, constipation and spinal cord compression.



DOWN SYNDROME | ATLANTO-AXIAL INSTABILITY | HYPOTONICITY | CARDIAC CONCERNS

Contraindications and Precautions:

- Follow all known contraindications and precautions
- // Neck // no traction, use care with massage on neck area, possibility to dislocate of C1 & C2
- // Cardiac // investigate any cardiac or other health related conditions. If cardiac issue present. No gliding in the direction toward the body (heart) on extremities (no distal to proximal gliding)

Massage and Touch Therapy Suggestions:

- Watch verbal and non-verbal cues closely
- Use techniques to address GI system, slow motility and constipation
- Adapt techniques to aid muscle tone in the case of Hypotonicity or Hypertonicity
- Always consider both the infant's medical and emotional needs, begin massage where there is the most access for skin-to-skin contact
- Use care and caution in areas where the child may have experienced pain, (e.g. line placement, ear exams), always begin with Nurturing Touch
- Adjust techniques to address face, cheeks, lip and feeding difficulties

Some Considerations:

- Follow the guidance of the healthcare provider
- Always ask baby's permission to receive touch
- Ask parent/caregiver and/or healthcare provider to help you recognize baby's specific cues (the caregiver who has spent the most time with the infant may have an easier time recognizing baby's cues). ***A baby born diagnosed with Down Syndrome, may have a higher pain threshold, so it is important to be mindful of pressure and pacing.***

(1) Nurturing
Touch



(2) Sun



(3) Moon



(4) Rainbow



(5) Stars



DOWN SYNDROME CAUTIONS TO REMEMBER

Atlanto-axial instability

No traction due to possible dislocation of C1 & C2

Cardiac conditions

No gliding on the extremities from distal to proximal due to venous return of blood toward the heart

