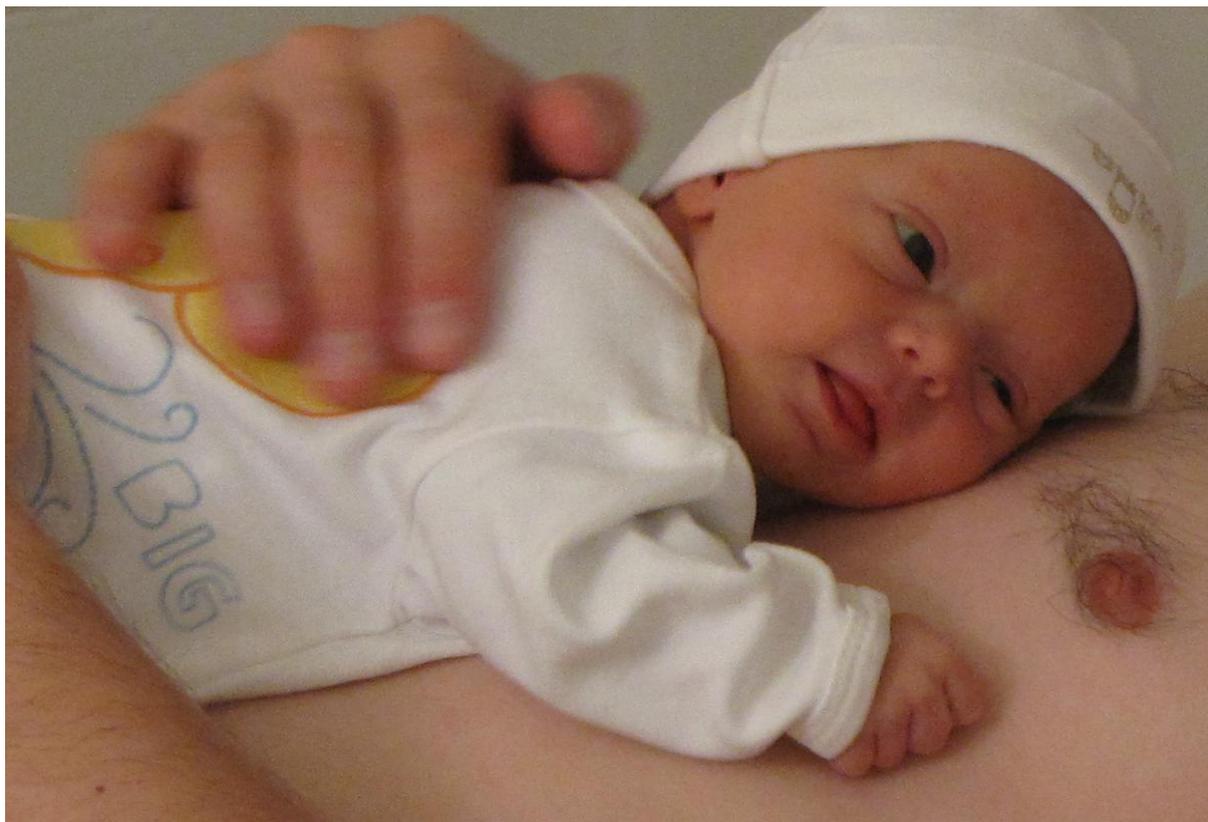


SHANTALA

Basic principles of making contact and touching with sentient and empathic hands

Returning to sensory observation



For the parents and caregivers of a newborn child

Introduction

"Being touched and caressed, being massaged, is food for the infant.
Food as necessary as minerals, vitamins, and proteins.
Deprived of this food, the name of which is love, babies would rather die.
And they often do."

- Frederick Leboyer, M.D. in *Loving Hands: The Traditional Art of Baby Massage*

For (expectant) parents, caregivers and other interested parties

In front of you is a handbook that describes the important role of loving contact and touch in caring for your baby. It is about giving your baby the attention and the loving touch it deserves through your sentient and empathetic hands. Fundamental touch that is complete.

Because the earliest moment that we, teachers affiliated with the Association of Shantala Massage Teachers (Vakgroep Shantalamassage Docenten, VSD), can offer the course Shantala baby massage is when your baby is 6-weeks old, we offer you this handbook based on the Shantala baby massage.

As a(n expectant) parent or caregiver, you can acquaint yourself with the basic principles and skills of Shantala baby massage and learn how to apply them. We hope this handbook awakens your enthusiasm and inspires you to adopt the basic principles for making contact and touching from the moment of your baby's birth, or perhaps even while your baby is in the womb.

Professional care providers who are involved in the pre- and postnatal periods are also invited to read this handbook. As a care provider during the pre- and postnatal periods, you have an important task: you provide an example for the parent/caregiver. You are an important resource for parents; you can demonstrate the basic principles of making contact and loving touch. In this way, you can guide expectant parents and caregivers in how to create a safe and secure feeling for the newborn.

This approach based on Shantala baby massage works in a preventive way with regards to: bonding, crying, good motor stimulation, stereotypical postures, rest/routine/stimulus reduction, and sleep.

12 principles of Shantala baby massage:

1. Make sure that you feel relaxed before you make contact and touch your baby.

Feel how you make contact with your hands. Where is your attention? How quickly or slowly do you place your hands on your baby? Do you use your whole hand or a part of your hand? Do you feel tension or relaxed? To be present in your hands, to do, to experience, to feel and to empathize with your baby is another "knowing" than having knowledge of something! See Theme 1: Grounding.

2. Always approach your baby calmly and with attention.

See Theme 2: Slowing down.

3. Slow down.

Carry out your caregiving actions more slowly than you are used to doing - that is, in 1st gear versus the 5th. See Theme 2: Slowing down.

4. Feel and observe with each touch.

Be aware of each touch. Be aware of the presence in your hands. The foundation of each touch, as understood in Shantala, is: complete awareness, the desire to be a witness to what is (sensing) and not wanting to add. This is *the* foundation of (self)development.

5. Observe how the baby responds to the touch.

See Theme 6: Body language.

6. Pick up and carry the baby in a supportive manner.

Carrying the baby in a supportive manner is a protective, tender gesture with which the parents/caregivers express that they think their child is good and lovable. In this way, parents/caregivers validate the child's value and purpose of existence. In practice, when a crying baby is picked up and carried in a supportive way, the baby frequently stops crying (unless its hunger is so great). See Theme 2: Methods for picking up and carrying a baby in a supportive manner.

7. Offer safety and security

Because babies do not have a protective layer around their energy fields yet, they are very vulnerable and impressionable. See Theme 4: Offering safety and security.

8. Avoid being swept up in your baby's restlessness.

See Theme 1: Grounding

9. Each moment of contact has a beginning and an end.

Approach your baby slowly, while speaking and do not let go of your baby suddenly. Rather, slow down that last moment of contact and end the contact gradually.

10. Speak to your baby softly and with a calm voice.

Tell your baby what you are doing, what is going to happen, what you see and what you hear. Use a soft and calm voice. Your baby will be relaxed by your words. See Theme 6: Communication.

11. Let your baby relive the way it lay in the womb, that is, the fetal position.

See Theme 2: Methods for picking up and carrying a baby in a supportive manner and Theme 3: The Tummy Tub.

12. Let your baby experience twisting movements in its trunk ("rotations") during diaper changes and dressing.

While dressing and undressing your baby, you can interact with your baby and apply a playful form of massage. Slowly help your baby twist from its pelvis to the right and to the left using your feeling and empathic hands. In this way, you stimulate your baby to rotate through its trunk, which is important for motor development. In addition, rotational movements help prevent the development of stereotypical postures. See Theme 7: Stimulating trunk rotations.

Theme 1: Grounding

What can you do to help yourself relax?

What is your state of mind in any given situation? Do you feel your feet on the ground? Is your breathing deep or shallow? Are you in the here-and-now? Grounding refers to a basis state of being that allows one "to be": to be in touch with yourself and to be aware of what you are doing. It is about being present in the here-and-now.

What is grounding?

Grounding is a way to become aware of our body and mind. Grounding leads to a sense a harmony and more balance in our actions. You live with an inner calmness. This is in contrast to doing things automatically and rushing. In order to free yourself from automatic reactions, close your eyes and turn your attention inward. Focus your attention onto your body and your breathing.

3 ways to ground yourself:

1. Standing

- Stand on the ground with both feet under your hips and your feet facing forward.
- Close your eyes and turn your attention inward; feel your body from inside-out.
- Bring your attention to your feet and feel how your soles are in contact with the ground.
- Let your feet carry the weight of your body. Feel how your body is being supported by the ground.
- Let yourself sigh and let all your worries and thoughts flow through your feet and into the earth. Breathe deeply in and out a few times.
- You can use your arms to support your breathing: raise your arms above your head as you inhale. Hold your breath in as long as you comfortably can and then slowly exhale as you lower your arms.
- You can repeat this grounding exercise any time you feel out-of-balance.

2. Opening your heart

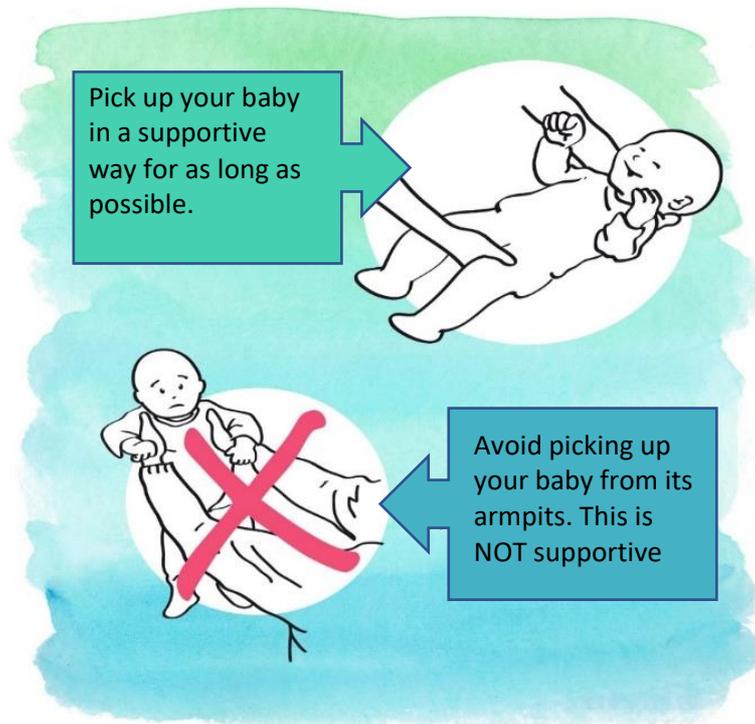
- Bring your attention to your heart and nourish yourself with the intention to have respect for yourself and for all living beings.
- Feel appreciation and gratitude for yourself and all the good things around you. This opens your heart. Feel what this does with your attitude!
- To live life with your heart open means that you are not living in your head and that you are open to the love and beauty of what is.

3. Sit quietly

- Sit in a chair with your back straight and your feet on the ground.
- Your feet are under your knees and your knees are hip-width apart.
- Place your hands on your lower abdomen, close your eyes and turn your attention inward.
- Feel your body from inside-out.
- Bring your attention to your breathing. Observe the movement of your breath. Feel how your trunk expands as you inhale and how it deflates as you exhale. Simply observe your breathing.
- Bring your attention to your hands and feel the movement under your hands as you breathe. Just observe. Continue until you feel calmer. Repeat as much as you like.

Theme 2: Methods for picking up and carrying your baby in a supportive manner

Babies want to feel safe and secure.



Why it's important to support the pelvis:

- The body's balance point is anchored in the pelvis. The physical centre of gravity and the effective centre of gravity are located here. Together they form the sensory middle point of the body.
- The human pelvis is shaped like a dish. When it is aligned horizontally, thanks to correct physiological and sensory balance, the body is said to be fundamentally aligned and in harmonic balance.
- When the body is in harmonic balance, the body moves from its base. The **base** is located above the centre of the pelvis.
- People who have felt supported and validated in their upbringing will sense their self-esteem and self-confidence in their base. The base houses a person's potential for emotional development and ability to make contact on an emotional level. It is therefore critical that a baby's base is supported by another person.
- Babies can experience this sense of support by those who are emotionally connected with them and when they are held by sentient and empathetic hands.
- Being picked up in a supportive manner is a protective, tender gesture where the parent, often the mother, can convey to her baby that it is good and loveable. This, in turn, validates the child's existence as valuable and meaningful.

- Through this, the child feels validated; its existence has value and it feels connected with the mother. Moreover, a permanent sense of self-assurance and self-confidence is developed, that is, the child's sense of self.

How to pick up a baby in a supportive manner

- Picking up a baby in a supportive manner always involves placing a hand under the baby's bottom (the base). This hand serves as a supportive surface for the baby. The parent's other hand provides additional support for the upper back/neck/head or chest as indicated.
- The feelings of tenderness, affection and protection are present in the parent's hands.
- When a baby is carried in a supportive way, it can freely move its arms and legs.



** Babies are commonly picked up by their armpits. Do your best to avoid this. When a baby is picked up by its armpits, it becomes an object: passive, dangled. The baby misses the feeling of being complete.

** In practice, when a crying baby is picked up in a supportive manner, it stops crying more often than not. Being held in a supportive way gives the baby reassurance and security, and it allows the baby to freely observe its surroundings.

How to up your baby when it is lying on its back:

- **Method 1:** Slide one arm under the shoulders, the other hand holds the baby's bottom from between the legs with the **thumb in the groin**. Simultaneously turn your baby's bottom toward you and lift its head up. In this way, your baby's body is brought in a rotated position, which prevents overextension, and your baby feels supported in its base.
- **Method 2:** Place one hand on your baby's chest with your forearm aligned with the centre of your baby's body. With your other hand initiate a rolling motion from your baby's pelvis and turn the baby onto its tummy. Your baby is now lying on your forearm. with one leg on either side. In this way, you can lift up your baby and carry it on your forearm.



Carrying your baby:

** Always support your baby under its bottom!

- **Method 1:** Support your baby under its bottom, between the legs, with the palm and the thumb of one hand on the backside and your fingers on the front. Place your other hand gently on the front side against your baby's chest.
- **Method 2:** Support your baby's back against your abdomen. Lay your arm diagonally across the stomach of your baby and hold its bottom securely with your hand between its legs with your thumb in the groin.
- **Method 3:** Your baby lies with its tummy on your forearm. Your baby's arm is behind your arm. Your hand is placed between your baby's legs with the thumb in the groin, the palm of your hand under your baby's bottom and your fingers on its backside.



Passing your baby to another person

- Support your baby under its bottom and chest so that the baby can see where it is going. **Place** your baby in the arms of the other person so that the other person is not tempted to pick up your baby by the armpits.
- **Not like this!**



Theme 3: The Tummy Tub



Benefits of a tummy tub:

- Compared to a relatively large bath, soaking in a tummy tub gives your baby the feeling of being back in the womb: warm, safe and protected. Young babies will pull their legs up and curl up in the fetal position.
- Soaking in a tummy tub promotes a flexed posture (a round, relaxed spine). The flexed posture decreases a baby's tendency to hyperextend its spine.
- Because the head is aligned in the middle, the baby is able to look at its surroundings.

How to use a tummy tub:

- Fill the tummy tub with hand warm water (37°-38°Celsius) to a depth of 10 cm (maximum). Use less water for younger (lighter) babies.
 - Note: for babies who have a tendency to hyperextend their spines, use cooler water (35°-36°C). This decreases the stimulus to hyperextend the spine.
- Place the tummy tub at a height that allows you to maintain a good posture so your back is not strained. That is, you are able to stand up straight, knees slightly bent and relaxed, feet hip width apart or one foot in front of the other.
- Check that everything you need is laid out such as a towel or bath cape, diaper, clothes etc.
- Undress your baby.
- Pick up your baby in a supportive manner with one hand on the front side supporting your baby's base (hand baby's crotch with thumb in the groin). The other hand supporting the upper back/head as necessary.
- Slowly lower your baby into the water. Keep supporting your baby until your baby's shoulder blades are resting against the walls of the Tummy Tub and the baby is sitting on the bottom.
- Next, slide your hand from your baby's back slowly above toward the direction on your baby's head. Your hand on the front side supports your baby's base and your forearm supports your baby's chest and prevents your baby's head from gliding into

the water. If your baby's pelvis is in a neutral position and is sitting in a stable manner, you can move your hand from your baby's crotch to its belly. It is also possible to support your baby's head.

- Your baby's buttocks sit on the bottom of the Tubby Tub, and hands and feet are relaxed.
- If your baby indicates that it has had enough or if you feel it has been enough, slowly lift your baby out of the Tummy Tub in a supportive manner (hand under your baby's buttocks and thumb in the groin) on your forearm. While you carry your baby on your forearm, use your free hand to cover it with a warm towel.
- Keeping your baby wrapped in the towel, turn your baby to face you and now you have a content baby in your arms. Take a moment to cuddle with your baby and dry your baby off.
- You can use a Tummy Tub with your baby until it is +/- 9 months. After this, you can use a larger Shantala bucket.

NB. Do not overfill the Tummy Tub with water. Otherwise, your baby will be pushed upward by the buoyancy of the water and lose contact with the bottom of the bucket. If your baby loses contact with the bottom of the bucket, then it will no longer feel grounded and will have the tendency to hyperextend its spine. Also, **never leave your baby unattended!**

Theme 4: Offering safety and security

Whereas adults have a protective layer around their energy fields, babies do not. Due to this lack of a protective layer, babies are vulnerable and impressionable. Their nervous systems pick up all external stimuli, which quickly leads to overstimulation.

Because babies have little or no ability to protect themselves, they need others to do so. The protective layer around their energy field gradually develops until their 7th year of life.

Ways you can protect your baby from external stimuli are:

- Hold your baby on your lap, which allows you to shield your baby with your energy field.
- Cover your baby's head with a cap/hat. The fontanelles are particularly sensitive as they are but a thin barrier to the central nervous system and the senses.
- Lower the cap of a pram in busy environments.
- Be aware of the stimulation from colours, toys and sounds. Select soft colours and calming music as much as possible.
- Massage and touch your baby as much as possible: Shantala baby massage strengthens and facilitates the development of the nervous system, which enables your baby to process external impulses.

Theme 5: Slow yourself down

When you are together with your baby, slow yourself and your actions down. The world outside the womb is busy, noisy and fast-paced, which is tough for a baby to handle.

For babies, especially newborns, slowing down offers security and comfort. A slow tempo is calming. Babies operate at a lower frequency than adults.

By slowing down, you adjust yourself to the world and rhythm of your baby, which makes it easier to make contact. You will also feel calmer, which has a positive effect on your baby and its entire environment.

If you operate at a high frequency or do things quickly, you will cross your baby's boundaries. In such a situation, you are not in connection with your baby. You will also lose your own inner harmony and your awareness of the here-and-now.

Theme 6: Communication through the 5 senses

Communication with babies occurs through the 5 senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and the most important, touch. By communication through the senses, the baby starts trusting its surroundings: its caregivers and the world!

1. Touch - making contact through the skin:

Touch has a deep effect on a baby's system. Make contact using your hands in a sensitive and compassionate manner. Your baby will then experience a sense of **safety and security**. This will also help your baby come in contact with its base.

If you feel stressed, take a deep breath and exhale, and ground yourself before you make contact!

Skin-to-skin contact

- Having skin-to-skin contact with your newborn within the first hour following your baby's birth is crucial for stimulating breast milk production.
- You can also have skin-to-skin contact with your baby while feeding with a bottle.
- Hospitals have implemented protocols for daily skin-to-skin contact with babies who are admitted.
- Daily skin-to-skin moments are also beneficial for healthy babies who are home.
- Research has shown that skin-to-skin contact fosters a longer duration of breast feeding and the number of feedings a day. In addition, it has an important role in the bonding process, and it is a pleasant quiet moment in the day.
- Skin-to-skin contact with the father is also beneficial. This does not have any effect on the breastfeeding relationship but facilitates the bonding process between father and baby.

2. Sight - making contact through eye contact:

Connect with your baby by looking at it and making eye contact.

Take time to simply watch your baby calmly without wanting or having to do anything nor wanting or having your baby do something.

3. Hearing - making contact through sound:

Always tell your baby what you are going to do using a calm voice. This reassures and calms your baby and you stay **connected** with it. You know what you have planned and will do, but your baby does not.

By consistently **explaining** and **naming** what you are doing, your behaviour becomes predictable for your baby and gives it self-confidence.

4. Taste - making contact through taste:

This takes place through breastfeeding or bottle-feeding. Also see "touch".

5. Smell - making contact through scents:

Your baby recognizes your scent. A baby can be comforted by placing a T-shirt that has been worn by its mother under its head.

Be careful with strong and unfamiliar scents such as perfumes.

Theme 7: Promoting rotation during daily care activities

While dressing, undressing and changing diapers, you can play and apply a form of playful touch. This involves helping your baby experience trunk rotations, which are important for developing motor control.

To encourage symmetrical motor development, it is the best if you can teach yourself to dress and undress your baby with its feet pointing toward you and its head away from you. This positioning makes it easier to help your baby roll to the left and right, and your baby can see you continuously and remain in contact.

1. When undressing your baby

Place your hands on your baby's pelvis and explain what you are going to do. Starting from the shoulders, gently and slowly stroke your baby downward over the chest and abdomen, and then over the legs and feet. Then again from the shoulders, stroke downward over the arms and hands. If your baby enjoys having its face stroked, use both hands to stroke your baby from the fontanelle down along the ears (not over the ears) to the chin.

Sweater/shirt:

- Place one hand under your baby's buttocks and lower back with the thumb in the groin, and slowly roll your baby onto its side. By rolling slowly, your baby has a chance to turn its head to the same side. Combine the movement with a verbal cue to roll, which will help teach your baby what to do.
- Undo any buttons on the back and pull the sweater up toward the upper arm. Try to pull the sweater over the arm as far as possible. Place one hand fully on your baby's back and use your other hand to pull the sleeve gently over the arm.
- Let your baby know that you are going to roll its back, place your hand in back on your baby's base and see if your baby rolls its head back. Do this slowly and help your baby roll to the other side.
- Pull the sweater over the second arm as far as possible. Place one hand fully on your baby's back and use your other hand to pull the sleeve gently over the arm. and then roll your baby back onto its back.
- Ensure that the sweater is rolled up to your baby's neck. Then slowly pull the sweater over your baby's head from back to front.

Pants:

- Let your baby know what you are going to do and stroke your baby's legs downward from the hips to feet.
- Place one hand at your baby's base with your thumb in the groin and roll your baby slowly to one side. Pull the waistband down over your baby's hips and buttocks, which are facing upward.
- Roll your baby slowly to the other side using the base grip. Pull the rest of the waistband down over your baby's hips and buttocks. Help your baby roll back onto its back.
- Pull the pant legs off in a playful way.

2. When changing a diaper

- Let your baby know what you are going to do.
- Unfasten the diaper, and slowly roll your baby to one side using the base grip. Remove the diaper.
- Clean your baby's bottom as needed, roll your baby onto its back, and let it know you are finished with this task.
- Next, let your baby know that you are doing to put on a clean diaper. Show your baby the clean diaper and lay it open.
- Roll your baby onto one side using the base grip.
- Slide the diaper under the buttocks and roll your baby onto its back.
- Pull the diaper through between the legs and fasten securely.

3. When dressing your baby:

Place your hands on your baby's pelvis and explain what you are going to do. Starting from the shoulders, gently and slowly stroke your baby downward over the chest and abdomen, and then over the legs and feet. Then again from the shoulders, stroke downward over the arms and hands. If your baby enjoys having its face stroked, use both hands to stroke your baby from the fontanelle down along the ears (not over the ears) to the chin.

Sweater/shirt:

- Let your baby know that you are going to put a sweater on it. Roll the sweater up and slide it behind your baby's head. Then pull the sweater over its head from back to front.
- Place your hand at your baby's base. Slowly roll your baby to one side so that it can participate by turning its own head. Give your baby a verbal cue to turn its head so that it learns the expected action.
- Lift a sleeve up and show it to your baby. Place your thumb and index finger in the opening of the sleeve and then take hold of your baby's hand. If possible, place your finger in its fist. Use your other hand to gently pull the sleeve over the arm and shoulder. Be careful not to pull on your baby's arm. Over time, your baby will extend its arm on its own and you can pull the sleeve down without having to hold its hand. Stroke your baby's shoulders down over its arm and back.
- Let your baby know you will roll it back. Hold your baby by its hip and legs and see if it is able to turn its head back on its own. Give your baby time.
- Roll your baby over to the other side and put on the other sleeve. Fasten buttons on the back if necessary and roll your baby from its base onto its back again.

Pants:

- Tell your baby what you are going to do and then stroke your baby's legs gently downward.
- Bunch up one pant leg and slide it over one foot and over the leg. Repeat with the other pant leg.
- Place one hand at your baby's base and help your baby roll onto one side. Do this slowly so your baby can (try to) turn its own head.
- Pull the pants up as far as you can. Then stroke the upward facing leg down from the hip to feet. Help your baby roll back and onto the other side.

- Pull up the pants on this side and then stroke the upward leg down to the feet. Help your baby roll onto its back.
- Take hold of your baby's feet, bring them to your face, make eye contact with your baby and play a little foot game.

A few final words

With our eyes we see you my child

With our hands we touch you
While we need two hands to pick you up
And we need one hand to caress you
We only need one second to realize how blessed we are...

We wish you many fine moments with your baby.

If you are interested in following a Shantala baby massage course, then please visit the website of the Dutch Association of Shantala massage Instructors (Vakgroep Shantalamassage Docenten, VSD) at www.shantala.nl for more information and an instructor in your neighbourhood.

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