Many children could do with some gentle abdominal massage to help them digest their food. Often in our culture, babies and children are overfed. Massage can be the key step to helping them move contents through their large intestine.

Basic abdominal massage is a wonderful skill to have as a parent. You can start this from as early as newborn, continue it through the toddler years and well into their childhood.

Signs of overfeeding in babies and toddlers include: permanent red cheeks, thick train tracks of phlegm coming out of their nose on a reasonably consistent basis, highly smelly poos (sometimes a couple of sloppy ones per day with mucus in them, sometimes they’re constipated instead), irritable, they seem robust but clogged up. In Chinese Medicine, we call this “accumulation disorder”.

There are fantastic Chinese herbs to help clear out your child’s system, which we use regularly in the clinic and they work wonders. Clearing the accumulation disorder helps to clear up chronic eczema in no time, get rid of recurring ear infections, clear lingering colds, coughs and skin irritations that don’t seem to shift.

As well as herbal treatment, it is of paramount importance to change their diet. Space out meals with minimal to no snacks in between (this gives their body time to properly digest the food they have taken in).

Never have fruit for dessert straight after a main meal– have it separately so it can digest properly and not ferment on top of the main meal.

Cut down on mucus-producing foods – avoid peanut butter, tomato paste, dried fruit, bananas, avocados, oranges, sugar, icy foods and drinks, lots of juice, and dairy other than their formula. These won’t all need to be avoided forever – things like bananas and avocados can be brought back in once a better gut balance is established and the system is not being over-taxed anymore.
For the abdominal massage, follow the large bowel with the pink arrows in these three pictures first.

Stroke 1, 2 and 3 about three times each, then move in one complete motion in the shape of a lower case “n”.

Facing their tummy, start from the bottom left, move up and around, finishing on the lower right hand side. You can do this three to four times. Once you’ve completed that stage of the abdominal massage, you can start the second stage, step 4.

Step 4 This massage helps your child get rid of gas and helps them to digest their food. You go in one direction with your finger or a couple of your fingers together. Stroke from top (solar plexis) to bottom (navel). This flows along the meridian known as Ren Mai which has lots of connections to the digestive system. Following that, there is a final stage. This addresses the Stomach energy too, and you will be massaging their Stomach meridian.
MASSAGE OF

STOMACH MERIDIAN

This massage technique is incredible for improving the digestion and immunity of a child. You stroke down their leg as shown below, approximately from point ST-36 to point ST-39 on both sides. When they are newborn, five strokes is sufficient. When they are a few months old, give it a good eight strokes, and then for a toddler, something like 15 strokes would be great. You always stroke both sides – if you can! It’s important to go in the direction of the channel, which is down towards their feet. This means you only stroke in ONE direction.

You will feel the shin bone on the top of their leg – make sure you are to the outer side of that when stroking downwards. To be exact, the Stomach channel is one finger width to the outer side of that shin bone (your child’s finger width!).

With children, you don’t have to be exact with the points like you do for adults, as their systems are still very much growing and the meridians are broader and more simplified when they are young.

Happy massaging!

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