

Loving touch brings out the best in babies

By RHIANNON HOYLE

MASSAGE is a favourite form of relaxation but new research says babies, more so than parents, are its greatest benefactors.

The International Association of Infant Massage Australia, founded 10 years ago, has found massage to be a successful way of contributing to a new generation of happy and healthy children.

Vice President of IAIM Australia Glenda Chapman said a baby's earliest experiences with touch can affect every aspect of their lives.

"Clinical research has demonstrated that a loving, nurturing touch has a lasting positive impact on a baby's emotional and physical well-being," she said.

"Parents report increased feelings of confidence in caring for their baby as a result of infant massage.

"Also, research studies show respiratory, muscular, circulatory and immune systems all benefit from the positive effects of massage."

Ms Chapman said the massage techniques were ideal for premature, developmentally challenged, pre natal, drug exposed or HIV positive infants, as well as with

foster, adoptive and teenage parents. "Touch is the first and most vital sensory experience," she said. "Infant massage uses gentle, tactile stimulation and loving verbal communication to deepen the relationship between babies and their parents."

The organisation visited Adelaide for the first time last week conducting a course for both parents and potential instructors at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

The group will conduct training courses in other capital cities and return to Adelaide in September.

"We have used the course to teach parents how to massage their own babies," she said.

"But we also use it as a training course for potential instructors, as well as registered nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and childbirth educators." Kathy Bates, 30, of Paradise, said she enjoyed the course, which she has been attending with her son, 18-week-old Jack.

"I decided to come to the classes to relax my baby," she said during the class. "To relax him and to help him sleep."



NURTURING: Kathy Bates, of Pooraka, massages son Jack during the course at the Women's and Children's Hospital.
Picture: DARREN SEILER