



How to Massage Your Belly

Life stress is sometimes manifested as tightness in the muscles of your abdominal wall, or in the muscles of your gastrointestinal tract. (Injuries, some exercises, repetitive stress, pregnancy, and childbirth can also cause tightness in your belly). When your abdominal muscles are tight, it causes discomfort and restricts your breathing; in some cases it can contribute to digestive problems, such as chronic constipation, acid reflux (heartburn), and recurring belly pain. Try this abdominal self-massage to help release tension, soothe your belly, and make your breathing easier and fuller.

For the best position to massage your belly, lie on a bed or couch, and prop yourself up with two bed pillows. Then, place another pillow under your knees. Have massage oil or lotion at hand. You are ready to begin.

Step 1. Relaxing the Belly

Begin by spreading your hands softly over your belly. Now begin to direct your breath to your lower belly when you inhale. Relax your belly and feel your hands rise and fall with your breath. Continue for a minute or two.

Step 2. Circles on the Belly

Warm massage oil or lotion with your hands and rub it onto your belly. Now, with your right palm, begin to make clockwise circles covering the entire belly. After a few circles, let your left hand join in, one hand following the other. Use gentle pressure and do not touch or put any pressure on the xiphoid process (the end of your breastbone).



Step 3. Circles Around the Navel

Place the fingertips of both hands just to the right of your navel. Make small circles about an inch wide, pressing gently against the skin and down into the muscles underneath. Now move your fingertips to just below your navel, and again make small circles. Continue to the left of your navel and then just above it. Now you have made the small circles all around the navel.

Step 4. Repeat Step 2

Step 5. Small Circles Along the Path of the Large Intestine

With the fingertips of both hands, make small combing movements along the path of your large intestine. Begin just inside the right hipbone and stroke straight up to your ribs, then stroke horizontally across the top of your belly, and then proceed down the left side. Stop just above the left hipbone. Move slowly and use medium pressure

Step 6. Skin Rolling

Using the fingers of both hands, gently pick up and roll the skin of your belly. Begin at your lower belly on the left side, and gradually move straight up to the bottom of your rib cage. Now switch and do the same on your right side. As you gently pick up and roll your skin, spend a little extra time massaging any abdominal scars that feel less pliable, in order to loosen adhesions or scar tissue.

Step 7. Circles on the Belly

Again, make clockwise circles covering the entire belly. Now, however, use slightly more pressure, and feel underneath your rib cage for any extra muscle tightness. Spend a little extra time over tight areas, sinking gently into the muscles as you make small circles with the fingertips. Also feel for tightness in the muscle attachments around the pelvic bowl (along the top of the hip bones and along the upper surface of the pubic bone). Again, for tight areas, sink in gently as you make small circles. Finally, use your palms to make large circles covering the entire belly.

To finish, place your hands over your belly. Notice how much easier your breathing is and how relaxed you feel.