

BabyGym and the Vagus Nerve

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The vagus nerve (/ˈveɪɡəs/ VAY-gəs), also called the pneumogastric nerve, is known as the tenth cranial nerve or simply CNX. Besides giving some output to various organs, the vagus nerve comprises between 80% and 90% of afferent nerves mostly conveying sensory information about the state of the body's organs to the central nervous system. ^[1]

When we are stressed priority is given to our heart, lungs and muscles so that we can fight or flight/run away and attention to our other bodily functions such as suckling decreases. That is why we have a dry mouth and butterflies in our stomach when we are stressed. Babies have all sorts of digestive problems when stressed like stomach cramps, colic and reflux. They also struggle to get their rhythm right when feeding and tend to swallow a lot of air. When the Vagus nerve is massaged, baby's body relaxes out of fight and flight mode and other bodily systems operate as normal making sucking, swallowing, metabolising and digestion possible and easier.

When my daughter, Nina, turned 12 weeks old she struggled with stomach cramps and reflux. She would lie and gulp a mouth full of air, like a fish on dry land. She also had a very weak neck and when I put her on her tummy she would just fall asleep.



I met Dr Melodie de Jager (Founder of BabyGym) and she suggested I massage Nina's Vagus nerve. While still at the meeting I immediately started to massage it; now the Vagus nerve is a wondering nerve, but it is closest to the surface of the skin under the left collarbone in line with the left eye, and BabyGym Instructors are taught to massage right there. Since that morning there has been no need for the medication and that was also the last day Nina received reflux and colic medication!

Because so many problems are caused by stress (trauma, breathing difficulty, skin irritation and allergies) massaging the Vagus nerve lowers stress and addresses many of these problems. I now tell everybody about babies' 'magic button'!

