

Tips to Promote Tummy Time

Empower Minds.
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Inspire Creativity.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) Back to Sleep Campaign has been in place for years and fortunately, the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) has significantly decreased as a result. Unfortunately, now that babies are sleeping primarily on their backs, positional plagiocephaly (flat spots on the back of the skull) has become more common which is one of the reasons that consistent tummy time is so critical. Additionally, tummy time promotes improved head control, strengthens the neck and shoulder musculature, and developmentally prepares your baby for important motor milestones such as rolling, sitting, and crawling. Following are tips for tummy time, which should only be done when your baby is awake and supervised:

- A full-term, healthy infant is not too young for tummy time! At first, infants will be on their tummy with their cheek against the surface. Many parents place their infant on their own chest or stomach (facing them) rather than on the floor.
- If placing your baby on the floor, make sure they are on a firm surface such as on a blanket on the floor. Do not place your baby on their tummy on a soft surface such as thick bedding without direct supervision. Tummy time needs to be on a firm surface both for safety (keeps the airway clear) and to provide a surface for your baby to push against, not sink into.
- Since tummy time needs to be when your baby is awake, avoid this activity near nap time. Remember, you want your baby awake and alert.
- Begin tummy time with 3-5 minutes per day, 2-3 times each day. Gradually build up the amount of time your baby spends on their tummy.
- By age 3-4 months, your baby should be spending a minimum of 20-30 minutes per day on their tummy. Remember, this does not need to be consecutive minutes but rather can be broken up into smaller time increments.
- If your baby is not a fan of tummy time, try laying on the floor with them (facing them) to encourage face-to-face time, which not only helps promote bonding, but also can be calming for your baby. Your baby will be motivated to try and lift their head to see you.
- You can place a mirror on the floor in front of your baby to encourage them to lift their head slightly. The use of toys on the floor in their visual field can also encourage head lifting and later it encourages reaching and grasping.
- Your baby's first attempts to lift their head while on their tummy will be very brief! Around 3-4 months, they will be able to lift and hold their head up for longer periods.
- You can lay your baby tummy down across your lap to burp them during feedings. This counts as tummy time too!
- When they are a little older (3-4 months), the use of a bolster or Boppy® can be helpful to support your baby's chest and assist them to begin pushing up on their extended arms. Making a bolster can be as simple as firmly rolling up a receiving blanket to place under your baby's chest with the arms reaching forward.
- Tummy time should be continued until your baby can independently and consistently roll from their stomach to their back.