

# For Expectant Families: Tummy Time



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Early Childhood Health and Wellness

*School Readiness Begins With Health*

## What is tummy time?

*Back to sleep, tummy to play.* You probably already know that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies be placed on their [backs to sleep](#) until they're a year old. Sleeping on his back reduces a baby's risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

But did you know that [pediatricians also recommend](#) that babies spend part of each day playing and exploring on their tummies? This happens when babies are wide awake and is known as tummy time.

## Why is tummy time important?

Babies spend a lot of time in strollers, car seats, and their parents' arms. They learn by exploring the world around them. To develop strong bodies, they also need a chance to move more freely. Tummy time helps babies develop strong neck, arm, shoulder, and back muscles. Over time, babies learn to reach for an object while on their tummies as well as roll from this position. These new skills and abilities will help them prepare for crawling, pulling up, and, later, walking.

## Getting started with tummy time

There's not much you need to give tummy time a try. You can start tummy time as soon as your baby comes home from the hospital! Here are some tips.

- You'll need a clean, firm surface, like a space on the floor covered by a sheet or blanket.
- Place your baby on her tummy and get down on her level where she can see you. Talk to her or offer her a colorful toy. She'll want to lift her head to see what's going on.
- You can also lay on your back and place your baby on your chest. Once your baby is comfortable, try moving him to the tummy time position on a blanket on the floor next to you. If your baby falls asleep on your chest though, put him to sleep on his back in a crib or bassinet.
- Start with a minute or two of tummy time, a few times a day. You can add more time gradually, as your baby gets older and stronger.

- Be sure to supervise tummy time carefully, so you can move your baby onto her back if she falls asleep.
- Remember, not all babies like tummy time at first. Lifting her head is hard work for your baby! You can pick her up when she's fussy or ready to move on to something else. Giving your baby tummy time several times a day helps her build the muscles she'll need to enjoy playing in this position as she grows.

## Tummy time tips

- Talk or sing softly to your baby. Roll so you are facing your baby and can "talk" to one another.
- Place a bolster, or rolled towel, under your baby's chest, extending out under his arms and shoulders. Using a bolster can make it easier for your baby to lift and turn his head. Make sure to supervise him!
- If your baby resists the tummy time position, [side lying](#) is a great alternative. Place your baby on a blanket on his side. If needed, prop his back against a bolster for support. If his head needs support, place a small, folded washcloth under his head. Both of your baby's arms should be in front of him, and you should bring his legs forward at the hips and bend his knees to make him comfortable.





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