

Tummy Time Activities During Home Visits

Tummy time is the time that babies spend awake and playing on their stomachs. Recommended by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), tummy time activities should always be supervised by an adult.

Home visitors and others who work with families can share this information about tummy time with families. It explores ways to include tummy time in daily routines and activities. It can also help in assessing a family's home to make sure tummy time activities and environments are safe.



Key Messages About Tummy Time

Tummy time gives babies the chance to:

- Practice and master important physical skills (e.g., lifting and supporting their head, turning it, holding it steady)
- Develop social skills, problem-solving skills, balance, vision, and hearing
- Stretch and strengthen their muscles, including the ones babies need to push up, roll over, crawl, and walk
- Develop a round head, since babies who spend much of their day on their backs may develop a flat spot on the back of their head
- See the world from a different perspective, which supports exploration and cognitive skills
- Interact and bond with caregivers

Tummy Time Milestones

Here are some key motor milestones to keep in mind:

1 Month



- Moves head from side to side while lying on their stomach
- Focuses eight to 12 inches away
- May turn toward familiar sounds and voices

3 Months



- Raises their head and chest when lying on their stomach
- Follows moving objects
- Turns their head toward the direction of sound
- Supports their upper body with their arms when lying on their stomach
- Stretches their legs out and kicks when lying on their stomach or back
- Opens and shuts their hands
- Grasps and shakes hand toys

7 Months



- Rolls both ways (e.g., front to back, back to front)
- Sits with, and then without, support of their hands
- Supports whole weight on their legs
- Reaches with one hand

12 Months



- Crawls forward on their belly by pulling with their arms and pushing with their legs
- Creeps on their hands and knees, supporting their trunk on their hands and knees

Strategies to Engage Families in Tummy Time Activities



To help with teaching families about the important connection between tummy time and the baby's mastery of physical skills that come later, review the [motor development guidelines](#). Below, you'll find some helpful strategies for making tummy time a success.

Review Safety Guidelines

Assess the home environment to make sure the baby is safe during tummy time. Remind parents that an adult must always supervise their baby during tummy time.

Share Ways to Adapt Tummy Time

Sometimes, families have concerns about placing their child on the floor for safety or hygiene reasons. In these situations, these tips can help families adapt tummy time:

- Help families find alternate floor coverings that can make the floor a safer, more usable space for their baby. Examples include a blanket or clean floor mat.
- Work with families to find alternate places for tummy time if needed. For example, you could help adults set up a bed, crib, or mattress with a firm mattress and tightly fitted sheet. Tummy time can take place on this surface as long as it's not too soft and an adult supervises the baby at all times.
- Remind families that tummy time is important for healthy development while babies are fully awake. However, they should always place babies on their backs to sleep.

Consider the Strengths and Needs of Families

If this is a family you have worked with, think back to your last visit with them.

- Did they mention (or did you see) activities or routines they especially enjoy with their baby? Could they adapt these to include some tummy time?
- What areas of the home environment support tummy time?
- What are the challenges or safety issues in this environment?

Ask Questions to Help Introduce and Promote Tummy Time

Talk with the family about their routines and daily activities. Think together about how to include tummy time in daily routines and favorite activities. Here are some questions to ask:

- What are some daily routines you share with your baby (e.g., diapering, feeding, playtime, walking, bathing)?
- What are some of your baby's favorite activities during the day (e.g., a favorite toy or object; a favorite song, rhyme, or game)?
- What position is your baby usually in during these activities?
- Where do you see opportunities to make tummy time part of these activities?

Include Tummy Time in Routines

Find a way to include tummy time.

Take one routine as an example and work together with the family to build tummy time into daily activities.

Watch the baby's activities in the home.

Share information about the baby's current motor development and what skills the baby may develop next. Help the family think about ways tummy time can promote development. Once a baby can roll over independently, they will typically move between tummy time and other positions during the day.

Explore family successes and challenges with this position.

Ask the family if they are using the tummy time position with their baby and how the experience has been. Practice tummy time together and watch the baby in the tummy time position to see how they respond.

Talk with families about why babies may not like tummy time.

Some babies resist tummy time or show distress in this position. Until babies can hold their heads up, babies may not like the position. Once they are stronger, they will like the position more.

Address family concerns about tummy time.

Make a plan together for trying these suggestions:

- Begin with tummy time about two or three times each day for three to five minutes. Increase the time as the baby starts to enjoy the activity. A great time to do this is after a diaper change, dressing, or waking up from a nap.

- Try these [tummy time activities](#):
 - Lay the baby on the parent's chest or tummy.
 - Place the baby tummy down on the parent's lap.
 - Position the baby on their side, with a blanket or towel behind them for support.
- Distract the baby with a toy or [read](#) them a book while they're in tummy time.
- When the baby begins to fuss or show distress, gently help them roll over to their back before picking them up.
 - This teaches babies the motor pattern for rolling.
 - Distress signs may include crying or grunting, frustrated facial expressions, reddening of the face, back arching, and leg extension.
- Provide families with the [Tummy Time Information for Families](#) handout.



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