

# Tummy Time Information for Families

You may already know that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that you place babies on their backs to sleep until they're 1 year old. That's because when babies sleep on their backs, it reduces their risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

But did you know that babies should spend part of each day playing and exploring on their tummies too? This is called tummy time.



## Why is tummy time important?

Babies spend a lot of time being carried in arms, strollers, and car seats. 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. They also discover how to roll from this position. These new skills help them prepare for crawling, pulling up, and walking.

## Getting Started

It's easy to give tummy time a try. You can start tummy time soon after your baby is born. Here is a step-by-step guide:

1

Find a clean, firm surface. A spot on the floor covered by a sheet or blanket works well.



2

Place your baby on their tummy. Get down on their level where they can see you.



3

Talk to them or offer a colorful toy. They'll want to lift their head to see what's going on.





## Tummy Time Tips

Here are some tips to make tummy time a success:

- 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.
- Watch your baby carefully during tummy time. That way, you can place your baby on their back if they fall asleep.
- Talk or sing softly to your baby. Face your baby so you can “talk” to each other.
- Place a bolster or rolled towel under your baby’s chest, with their arms out front. A bolster can make it easier for your baby to lift and turn their head.

## Changing the Approach

You can also lie on your back and place your baby on your chest. Once your baby is comfortable, try moving them to the tummy time position on top of a blanket on the floor next to you. If your baby falls asleep on your chest, put them to sleep on their back in a crib or bassinet.

Not all babies like tummy time at first. Lifting their heads is hard work for babies! You can pick babies up when they’re fussy or ready to move on to something else. Having several tummy time sessions a day helps babies build the muscles needed to enjoy playing in this position as they grow.

If your baby resists the tummy time position, side lying is a great alternative. Place your baby on their side on a blanket. If needed, prop their back against a bolster for support. If their head needs support, place a small, folded washcloth under their head. Both of your baby’s arms should be in front of them. Bring their legs forward at the hips and bend their knees to make them comfortable.



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