

## 'Tummy time' for your baby

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Tummy time is important for all babies. We chose to call the baby "she" as this is simpler than writing "he or she" every time.

### Why is tummy time important?

Your baby needs to spend time on her stomach every day, while she is awake and someone is watching her. This is called 'tummy time'.

In this position, your baby learns to lift her head and push up with her arms to lift her chest. This strengthens the muscles in her neck, shoulders and back. These muscles are important for learning to move; from lifting her head to rolling and crawling.

Tummy time also gives your baby a chance to explore and enjoy her surroundings in new ways.

Your baby should sleep on her back to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. During the day, she will also spend time in a car seat, carrier or swing. This adds up to a lot of time on her back. Without tummy time, your baby's upper body movements may be delayed and she may develop flattening of the back of her head.

### When should I start putting my baby on her stomach?

Tummy time can begin with a newborn baby. A newborn baby can lift her head briefly to look around. By 3 months of age, a baby's neck muscles are usually strong enough to hold up her head for a longer time.

## Where should I put my baby for tummy time?

Tummy play time can take place on any firm, flat surface covered by a non-fuzzy fabric, such as a crib, playpen or on the floor. Many babies enjoy being held slanted slightly upright, on their parent's chest or lap.

## My baby cries when I put her down. How can I help her adjust?

Babies may not enjoy tummy time at first. When babies are placed on their stomach they have to work against gravity to move. This is hard work and some babies will protest. Comfort and soothe your baby, but keep providing tummy time.

You can lay her on your chest, facing you. She may enjoy looking at your face while you help her prop on her elbows. Another position to help her get used to tummy time is to lay her across your lap.



Make it a fun time. Get down on the floor with her. Use toys or a mirror to encourage your baby to lift her head and play.

Build tummy time into her daily routine. Every time you put her down to diaper or dress her, place her on her tummy first for a moment. Then roll her over to change her diaper or clothes.

Gradually increase the amount of time your baby spends on her tummy.

To help your baby grow and develop:  
**“Back to sleep, Tummy to play”**