

Tummy Time

It is important for babies to sleep on their backs to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). However, a baby needs time on his or her tummy for stretching and strengthening his back and neck muscles. So to help your baby learn these skills, it is important for him to spend time on his belly while he is **awake** and you are with him.

Benefits

Tummy time helps your baby build strength in his neck, shoulders, arms and trunk. This will help him learn to roll, sit and crawl. Belly time while he is **awake** also helps him maintain a round head shape.



Picture 1 Tummy time on mom's chest.

How to Provide Tummy Time

- The best time for tummy time is when your baby is **awake**. He can practice holding his head up, looking side to side and supporting weight on his arms.
- Start slowly. Place your baby on his belly for 1 to 2 minutes at a time. Try to do this 4 or 5 times a day. The goal is to increase each tummy time session to 10 minutes, 4 to 5 times a day. By 4 months of age, he can be on his tummy 90 minutes a day.
- During rest breaks, help him roll and reach.
- Try placing baby on your chest while you lie down. Place his arms forward to push up (Picture 1).
- Place a small rolled towel under your baby's chest from armpit to armpit. This makes it easier for your baby to lift his head and to push up (Picture 2).

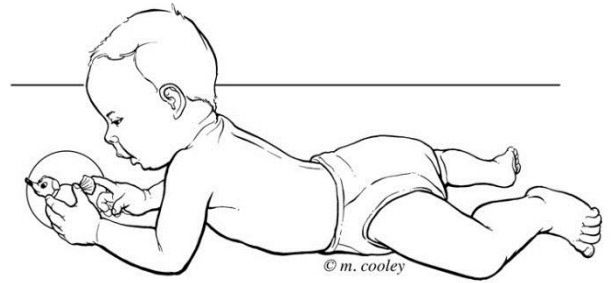


Picture 2 Tummy time on towel.

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How to Provide Tummy Time, continued

- Give your baby something to look at or to play with while on his tummy. A mirror is a great idea. Help him reach for toys (Picture 3). Help your baby bear weight through his arms by keeping his elbows under his shoulders
- Some babies don't like tummy time at first. Try shorter periods of tummy time several times a day. Giving baby a toy to play with may distract him and help him hold his head up. You can place your hands under his chest and lift him up gently to help him push up. When carrying him, hold him tummy side down or play airplane with him. As babies spend more time on their tummies, they get stronger and tummy time gets easier.



Picture 3 Tummy time with toy.