

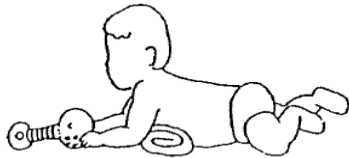
Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre

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"Back to sleep, Front to play" Tummy Time play tips

Why is tummy time important?

Babies who lay on their tummies have the opportunity to develop the muscles that lift the head and trunk. The muscles are important for the development of movement. If babies sleep on their backs, as recommended by the Canadian Institute of Child Health, and spend their awake time in a reclined position in infant carriers and swings, they tend to develop a flattening of their heads and possibly shortening of the neck muscles on one side.



In the prone position, babies get their first opportunity to take weight through their arms when they attempt to move and push on their arms.

Babies first experience movement on the floor when they accidentally roll from their tummies to their backs or when they push themselves backwards. Failure to develop movement on their tummies limits the ability to explore the environment and can lead to delays in gross motor skills.

When should I start putting my baby on her tummy?

Babies can be placed on their tummies while awake, beginning in the newborn period and always under supervision.

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

It is not uncommon for babies who have not been prone to object. When babies are placed on their tummies they have to work against gravity to move. At first this is a strenuous activity. Comfort and soothe your baby, but keep providing the experience.

Here are some tips, which may help:

- Make it a fun time. Get down on the floor with her. Use mirrors and toys to entice your infant to lift her head.
- Start by laying her on your chest facing you.
- Try placing her on your lap with one knee tilted up slightly.
- Incorporate tummy time every time you put her down. Before you diaper or dress her place her on her tummy for a moment before you roll her over.
- Gradually increase the amount of time your bay plays on her tummy.
- Tummy playtime can take place on any firm surface such as the crib, playpen or floor. It can take place on your chest or your lap.