## **TUMMY TIME**

## **What is Tummy Time?**

Tummy time is placing your baby on his stomach to play. Practicing tummy time helps babies develop the muscles necessary to lift their heads and, eventually, to sit up, crawl and walk. Remember, "**Back to sleep, Tummy to play”**: Your baby should always be awake during tummy time and under your careful watch.

**When should I start Tummy Time?**

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies begin tummy time the very day they come home from the hospital.

## **How long should my baby do Tummy Time each day?**

Encourage your baby to work his way up to about 15 minutes total on his tummy every day (or two to three sessions a day lasting three to five minutes each), always under your watchful eye. As your baby gets older, you can leave him on his belly for longer stretches, since older babies need more time on their tummies to build strength.

## **How to do Tummy Time**

* The ideal time to do tummy time is after your baby wakes up from a nap or following a diaper change.
* Clear a small area of the floor. Place your baby on his tummy on a playmat or clean towel.
* Surround your baby with a few favorite toys.
* Try to keep your baby belly-down for three to five minutes, two to three times a day.
* As your baby begins enjoying tummy time, work up to longer and more frequent sessions throughout the day.
* *Never* put your baby to sleep on his stomach. Sleeping in the prone position is a [significant risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)](https://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/sids.aspx).

## **Ways to boost Tummy Time**

* **Get down on the floor** with your baby, face-to-face or side-by-side. Chat him up and offer up a special toy for entertainment.
* **Place an unbreakable mirror** in front of your baby so he can see his own fascinating face. Vary the position, from in front of your baby to either side.
* **Tempt your baby** with enticing toys. Spread them around your little one in a circle so he’ll be tempted to reach for them, which helps develop all of the different muscles necessary to eventually sit up, crawl and walk.
* **Prop him up** by [placing a nursing pillow](https://www.whattoexpect.com/baby-products/nursing-feeding/best-nursing-pillows/) (or other firm cushion) under his chest and arms if he initially protests tummy time. Then try to wean him off of using these props**.**
* **Place your baby on your own tummy** while you lie on your back (watch out for drool!). Or raise him overhead as you lie down in a modified baby “bench press.” Don’t forget the silly noises and kisses!

## **What are the benefits of Tummy Time?**

* **Helps prevent flat spots f**rom forming on the back of baby’s head.
* **Allows your baby to work different muscles** than those he’d use on his back. By practicing his push-ups, your baby will develop the muscles in his arms, shoulders, upper back and neck that will eventually [enable him to lift his head](https://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/lift-head/).
* **Sets the stage for motor skills l**ike reaching, [rolling over](https://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/roll-over/), sitting up and crawling.