

Guide to Tummy Time

Tummy time can be a tricky position to navigate for some little ones, however, it is a crucial part of a baby's daily routine. Tummy time is key to strengthen a baby's cervical muscles (the muscles that hold up the head) and promote engagement with the baby's surroundings to encourage development. Tummy time also provides a strong foundation for all other gross motor milestones to come such as rolling, crawling etc.

Tummy time can help combat plagiocephaly (abnormal head shape) and torticollis (a shortening of the muscles on one side of the neck creating an asymmetrical head position which can further result in asymmetrical development).

When Can I Start Tummy Time?

Tummy time can begin on day 1 home from the hospital!

How Long Should Tummy Time Last?

Tummy time can begin in short increments of 2-5 minutes depending on how well your baby tolerates the position. As your baby begins to tolerate the prone (tummy down) position more readily, increase your time increments until your baby can spend ~10-15 minutes there. By 3 months, your baby should be getting about an hour of tummy time total per day.

What Position Should My Baby Sleep In?

Your baby should be placed on their back to sleep. It is not uncommon for babies to prefer to sleep with their head turned to one side. This can exacerbate any asymmetries of the skull due to prolonged pressure on flat spots during sleep. Two tips to help with this include:

- a. Change the direction your baby sleeps in the crib (switch position of head and feet). Babies often turn towards the side of greater stimulation or where their parents/guardians are if they sleep in the same room.
- b. If you notice that you baby tends to sleep with head to one side, gently rotate head to face opposite direction after they have fallen asleep.

Positions for Tummy Time:

Lying Over Your Leg or a Boppy: This will help shift your baby's weight towards his/her bottom to promote opportunity to lift their head!



Flat on the Floor: Sometimes simple is best...lay your baby flat on the floor and provide fun visual input such as mirrors, lights and colors!



Other Options:

- Baby lying on tummy on your chest facing you
- "Superman Hold": although this does not encourage as much arm/shoulder strengthening, carrying your baby belly down will promote neck strengthening as they lift their head to see their surroundings
- Remember to keep the environment stimulating enough to keep your baby's attention without creating overstimulation
- If your baby has a hard time calming down in this position, try playing soothing noises, dimming the lights, and gentle rocking to help with state regulation

Therapy Ball: Place your baby over a therapy ball and gently rock back and forth/side to side

