

Advice sheet

Tummy Time

Tummy time is any time your baby is supervised and positioned on its tummy for play. In 1994 the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) launched the Back to Sleep campaign, now known as the Safe to Sleep campaign. This campaign significantly reduced the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or 'cot death'.

We recommend that babies *always*

- sleep on their back to reduce the incidence of cot death
- are supervised when they are placed on their tummies
- are placed in car seats only when travelling

Why is it important?

- Tummy time helps to build and develop muscles that are required for rolling, sitting and crawling.
- Tummy time enables your baby to be able to move freely by not being restricted in a car seat or buggy and learn about movement.
- Babies also develop their vision by seeing things at eye level rather than staring at the ceiling.
- It also helps to prevent your baby developing a flattened head shape.



When can I start putting my baby on its tummy?

You can start placing your baby on its tummy as soon as they are born. The sooner you start the more likely your baby is going to tolerate this position.

How long should I put my baby on its tummy and what if my baby doesn't like it?

Start with little and often – you may only manage 30 seconds initially, a couple of minutes a few times a day. Gradually increase this time by a few minutes building up to half an hour. If your baby starts to cry then take a break and try again later. Very often babies do not like lying on their tummies and that is why this fact sheet aims to give you ideas as to how to make it easier. With regular practise babies tolerance this often improves.

Tips

- Try tummy time 'little and often' give your baby plenty of reassurance (cuddle breaks) if needed.
- Get down onto the floor, so that you are on the same level as your baby. Try lying alongside or opposite your baby, talking to them.
- Try different environments to place your child e.g. your chest, over your leg, over a rolled up towel, comfortable matt on the floor (especially if you have wooden floor).
- Use a variety of sensory based toys. Babies love to look in mirrors or shiny surfaces e.g survival blankets.

Remember it is important to allow your baby the opportunity to have (supervised) free time on the floor this includes lying on their back e.g under an activity gym.

Ideas for Tummy Time (from birth)

- Position your baby on your chest while you lie on your back on the floor or on your bed. This is great way to bond and interact with your baby.



- Hold your baby with its head supported on its tummy.



- Place your baby on their tummy over your knees/lap.
- Lie your baby over a rolled up towel – if you lie on your tummy head to head you can also interact with them.

From 3 months onwards

Place toys just in reach of your baby while they play on their tummy on the floor.

From 6 months onwards

Baby gymnastics and aeroplanes

