

# TUMMY TIME



**Infant and Child Development**

*An early start to a bright future*

# Back to Sleep - Tummy to Play!

Always place your baby on their back to sleep. This lowers the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). If your baby can roll over on their own, you do not need to move them onto their back while they're sleeping.



# What is Tummy Time?

Tummy time is...

- Time your baby spends on their tummy while awake and supervised.
- Time spent playing, being carried, or lying on their tummy.
- Helpful for babies of all ages to grow and develop.
- An important part of your baby's daily routine.
- A terrific way to bond and have fun with your baby.

## Tummy Time is Important

Babies spend a lot of time on their backs (e.g., in their car seat, stroller, and while sleeping). To support your baby's healthy growth, caregivers can practice tummy time every day!



## Tummy Time Helps your Baby

- **Control their head** and helps them form strong muscles in their neck, back, shoulders, arms, and hands.
- **Develop balance** needed for rolling, sitting, crawling, and walking.
- **Practice using their hands** and strengthen eye-hand coordination.
- **Explore the world** from a new angle, helping vision and learning.
- **Prevent flat spots** (Positional Plagiocephaly) on the head and tight neck muscles. Remember to gently turn your baby's head both ways during tummy time and while awake.

# Tummy Time Fun

- **Start slow.** Begin offering tummy time in short sessions and often throughout the day.
- **Make it part of your routine.** Try tummy time after naps and diaper changes.
- **Roll gently.** When starting tummy time, place your baby flat on their back and gently roll them onto their tummy.

## Flat on the Floor

- When your baby is stronger, place them tummy-down on a flat, firm surface.
- Lie in front of them and use toys or your face to get their attention. Gently guide their arm if needed.
- This encourages them to lift their head and push up on their arms.



## On Your Chest, Lap or Shoulder

Lie back and place your baby tummy-down on your chest. Support your baby's hips and back with your hand. As your baby gets stronger, keep their arms forward so they can push up and lift their head.



When your baby gets stronger, you can hold them at your shoulder.

Put your baby on their tummy on your lap. Hold their back and hips. Show a toy to help them lift their head. You can gently bounce or pat their bottom.



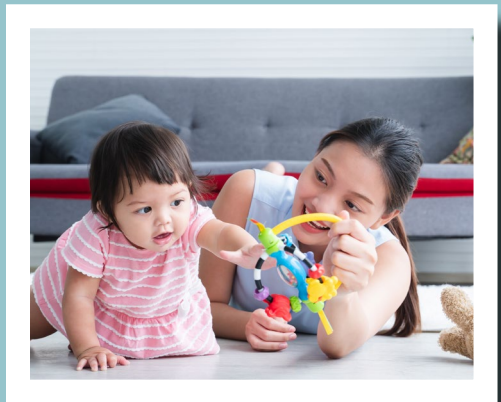
## Tummy Down Carry

- Hold your baby tummy-down across your arm, close to your chest.
- As they get stronger, they will start lifting their head.
- Gently rock them to help them feel calm.
- Try this in front of a mirror—babies love seeing their reflection.



## Reaching for Toys

- Lay your baby on their tummy with weight on their arms.
- Place a toy nearby and encourage your baby to reach with one hand.
- Gently guide your baby's arm if needed.



## Pushing Up on Straight Arms

- Lay your baby on their tummy with weight on their arms.
- Gently support their shoulders to help keep arms straight.
- For extra support, lay them over your leg while you sit on the floor.
- Encourage them to push up with straight arms and open hands.
- Once your baby can hold their head up and push through straight arms, try a fun rocking game.
- Gently rock them side to side while they are on their tummy.
- This helps strengthen their shoulders and arms, which is important for learning to crawl.



# Elevated Tummy Time

Try tummy time with your baby's chest slightly raised or supported:

- Over a breastfeeding pillow
- Across your thigh
- On a couch cushion
- Over a towel or blanket roll
- **Arm Position:** When strong enough, place your baby's arms in front with their elbows under their shoulders for better support.



- **Offer Support:** Gently place your hand on your baby's bottom to help them feel balanced to lift their head more easily.



## Airplane

- Lie on your back and lift your baby by their hips or rest them on your bent legs.
- Gently move them up and down.
- This helps strengthen their neck and back muscles while having fun!



## Pivoting During Tummy Time

- Lay your baby on their tummy.
- Place a toy on one side and encourage them to reach for it.
- Gently tickle the side you want them to turn toward.
- Move the toy in a circle to help your baby learn to pivot and turn.
- This builds strength and teaches your baby how to move and explore.



Some babies will need special consideration around tummy time success. Speak to your health care provider or an Infant & Child Development Consultant if you have any questions or concerns.



**HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT**

Durham Health Connection Line  
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

**[durham.ca/infantdevelopment](https://durham.ca/infantdevelopment)**

Dial 311 (within regional limits)



If you require this information in an accessible format,  
contact 1-800-841-2729

Oct. 2025