



Tummy Time Activities

If your baby doesn't tolerate tummy time—and even if she does, you are encouraged to try the following activities:



Activity #1: Tummy to Tummy

It's a good idea to begin exposing your baby to tummy time while you're both still in the hospital (</english/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/default.aspx>). The earlier you start, the more likely your baby will accept the stomach as a natural position. In fact, before the umbilical cord (</English/ages-stages/baby/bathing-skin-care/Pages/Umbilical-Cord-Care.aspx>) has fallen off, you can position your newborn on your stomach or chest while you are awake and in a reclined position on a chair, bed, or floor (*with a pillow to support your head*), tummy to tummy with baby.

Take this perfect opportunity to socialize with your newborn and encourage lots of eye contact. Talk in animated tones and use exaggerated expressions to get her to look at you. It's a special time to bond tummy to tummy.

Activity #2: Lap Time

You can also position your baby tummy down across your lap lengthwise while providing head support. Remember to keep her head aligned with her body. If she falls asleep in that position, just transfer her to the bed (*but place her down to sleep on her back* (</English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Back-to-Sleep-Tummy-to-Play.aspx>)). For more stimulation, slowly raise and lower your legs at the same time, then move them slowly from side to side. This motion will likely calm your little one.

Babies need to be exposed to a variety of textures throughout the day, and tummy time is the perfect opportunity to accomplish this. When your baby is on her tummy, the skin on her stomach, legs, arms, and face touches the surface on which she is lying. The most natural place to play is on a clean floor, a nap mat, or blankets of different textures. (*Note: Blankets should be secured so they don't slide around when baby moves her arms or legs.*) As she moves her body, arms, and legs against the surface, the friction that is created lets her know where her body is located in space.

Additionally, your baby will gain strength and flexibility during tummy time. Dressing your little one in an infant body suit (eg, Onesie (</English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/Dressing-Your-Newborn.aspx>)) for tummy time allows her to feel the various textures on her arms and legs.

Tummy time also allows your baby to visually explore the environment in a new way. When positioned on her back, she can see only the ceiling and whatever is directly around her. But on her stomach, she uses her muscles to lift her head and see the world at eye level, giving her a completely different view of the world—a new perspective!

An Important Reminder

Once your baby starts participating in tummy time, be sure to provide supervision. In this world of distractions, your phone will ring or you'll get called to another room, but stay with your baby because the AAP recommends that tummy time be supervised.

Babies with Special Health Care Needs

If your baby was born premature (</english/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/default.aspx>) or has reflux disease (</English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/GERD-Reflux.aspx>) or special needs, speak with your child's pediatrician about tummy time. Some babies need special consideration.

Activity #3: Side Lying With Support

Side lying is a great alternative to tummy time if your baby doesn't tolerate being on her stomach. Place your baby on her side; if needed, prop her back against a rolled-up towel for support. If her head needs support, place a folded washcloth under her head. Both of baby's arms should be in front of her, and you should bring her legs forward at the hips and bend her knees to make her comfortable.

Don't forget to distract your baby with a fun toy or read her an entertaining book while she's in this position. It is best to set up a regular time for tummy time and side lying, such as after naps, baths, or diaper changes. Just be sure to have a plan in place and take care to vary your baby's position every 10 to 15 minutes during playtime

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Strive to expose your baby to a variety of positions throughout the day, including time spent in your arms and on your lap. Remember, babies crave emotional interaction and connection with their parents.

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