

## Tummy Time Q & A

### What is "tummy time?"

"Tummy time" is a period of time when an infant is placed on her stomach on a firm, flat surface in order to develop and exercise muscles. More simply, it is the time infants spend on their tummies while playing. Tummy time prepares babies for scooting, rolling over, crawling, and eventually walking. As babies grow older and stronger, they will need more time on their tummies to build their strength.

### What position is an infant placed in during tummy time?

Infants should be placed on their stomachs on a flat surface on the floor. Place a rolled towel or blanket under the infant's armpits and chest to provide support if needed. Infants can lift their heads more easily if they are propped on their elbows. Tummy time can also take place when the infant is placed tummy-down on your lap, tummy down on your chest, or when carried in a "football" hold (his tummy on your forearm, face outward, head slightly elevated, and held close for support).

### When is the best time for a tummy time session?

The best time for a tummy time session is while the infant is awake, ideally just after a nap when the infant is rested. Never schedule a tummy time session when an infant is sleepy (there is a risk that the infant can fall asleep face down). Also, particularly for infants with reflux, do not schedule tummy time sessions right after meals.

### At what age should infants be introduced to tummy time?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics and Healthy Child Care America, infants can begin participating in tummy time beginning on the first day home from the hospital or the first day in your family child care home or center.

### How long and how often should infants participate in tummy time?

While recommendations vary, generally sessions should occur daily and sometimes 2 to 3 times per day for about 3-5 minutes each session (or less if the infant gets fussy). As the infant gets stronger, time can be increased in small increments. If she seems uncomfortable, end the session and try later.

## What is my role as a caregiver during tummy time?

First, supervise the infant *at all times* during tummy time and NEVER leave an infant unattended during tummy time. Do not walk away to participate in other activities (such as cleaning, warming bottles, or changing other children's diapers). Infants get tired quickly and easily. Secondly, make sure you are interacting with the infant as he participates in tummy time by being on the floor nearby so you can easily see the infant and interact with him.

## What activities can I do with an infant during tummy time?

Placing a toy just out of the infant's reach during playtime will capture her attention and encourage her to reach for the toy. Baby-proof mirrors at eye level for the infant will encourage her to raise her head to look at herself. You can also get on her level, then sing or talk to her to encourage her to look at you. Another idea is to place infants facing one another during tummy time so they can engage one another while you supervise them.

## What if an infant dislikes tummy time?

Some infants dislike tummy time initially. However, it is important to remember the benefits of tummy time and encourage the infant during shorter sessions in the beginning until their muscles become stronger. Make sure the infant is not hungry or sleepy during attempted sessions. Also, make sure you are interacting with the infant and offer a favorite toy to grasp his attention. Don't give up!