

Tummy time is an essential aspect of development from birth. It promotes:

- *Healthy development of the central nervous system and brain*
- *Strong neck, back and upper body muscles*
- *Balance, coordination, stability and postural skills*
- *Flat hand development, which increases precision finger and thumb movements*
- *Rolling over*
- *Visual development*
- *Crawling - an essential developmental milestone not to be missed.*



If your baby finds being on his tummy physically uncomfortable, introduce tummy time gradually, two or three times a day for a few minutes. It will eventually become part of your baby's daily routine and he will learn, play and practise essential head control movements in this position. Make sure your baby is safe and attended.

HOW TO MAKE TUMMY TIME FUN

1. *Keep your baby company on the floor. Coo, sing or make funny sounds to encourage him to lift up his head*
2. *Roll up a towel and place it under your baby's chest. Extend your baby's arms forwards over the towel. This supported position allows your baby to lift up his head and look around, which improves focusing ability and strengthens neck muscles*
3. *Place your baby on his back. Slowly pull your baby up to a sitting position (hold your baby under his arms). Hold him there for a few seconds and then ease him back down again*
4. *Place a safety mirror or favourite toy in front of your baby and draw his attention to it. The object will encourage your baby to lift up his head to get a better look*
5. *Shake a rattle or bell to one side of your baby to encourage him to turn towards the sound*
6. *Encourage creeping movements by placing interesting toys out of reach*
7. *Lie on your back and put your baby on your tummy or chest. Say your baby's name to encourage him to raise his head to get a better look at you*
8. *Place your baby on his tummy across one arm. Your baby's head will rest in the crook of your arm, but his legs will dangle free. Rock your baby in this position*
9. *Place your baby across your legs and pat his back. Patting will encourage your baby to lift up his head and straighten his legs*
10. *Place your baby on your lap facing your knees. Draw up your knees so that he can see what's going on. He'll probably love the new view*
11. *Put your baby on edge of the bed and sit on the floor with your face next to his. From this position, you can interact and play together*
12. *Put your baby on his tummy over a beach or gym ball and hold him firmly while you gently rock the ball back and forth. Your baby will learn to shift his body weight, which improves balance and coordination*
13. *Roll a ball over your baby's back, legs and arms. It's a great way to stimulate his skin and relieve tension*
14. *Place a ball in front of your baby and within easy reach. As soon as he touches the ball, it will roll away. Your baby will either 'swim' or on his tummy or lift himself up on his forearms in an attempt to reach it*
15. *Exercise or massage your baby while he lies on his tummy*

16. *When your baby can sit up unaided, place an interesting toy in front of him. He may end up on his tummy when he tries to grab it. In this position, he may make crawling movements, which is good for his brain development*
17. *Avoid putting your baby in a recliner or restraining device unless absolutely necessary. Your baby needs to be able to move and coordinate his movements without restriction*
18. *Spending time with your baby and giving plenty of praise and encouragement will soon make tummy time a pleasurable habit.*

Tummy time is an essential aspect of development because it leads on to crawling. Crawling fires groups of neurons (brain cells) in different parts of the cortex responsible for visual processing, sensory perception, conscious planning and prediction. It also activates eye-teaming, a crucial skill in learning to read.

Crawling is a key period in your baby's physical and intellectual development and it only takes a few minutes of daily tummy time to start seeing results.

Babies who spend most of their waking hours on their backs may experience delays in developmental milestones. If you have any concerns about your baby's development, see your GP.

A special thanks

The Neonatal Trust would like to acknowledge, and thank, Baby Sensory and Founder Dr Lin Day for their help with producing this resource.

Dr Lin Day (PhD, M.Phil, PGCE, BSc, Dip Ed), is one of the UK's leading parenting experts and a renowned author within the field of childcare and education. With over 35 years of practical experience working with parents and children and driven by the passion and commitment to offer the best possible service, Dr Lin Day developed Baby Sensory and Baby Sensory Foundations to provide the support and knowledge necessary to lead baby learning and development forwards in the most important year of life (and ran classes herself for 9 years).

Baby Sensory™
Precious Early Learning for Babies

ABOUT BABY SENSORY CLASSES

The remarkable ability of the brain to make connections and to absorb information has provided Baby Sensory with a wonderful opportunity to encourage the learning and development of babies from birth. Their classes give parents the chance to spend quality time with their babies, to interact warmly with them on a one-to-one level and to enjoy a wealth of rich sensory experiences.

All activities are accompanied by valuable developmental information. This is important because parents need to know why and how they can lead their baby's learning and development forwards in the most important year of their lives.

To learn more, head to www.babysensory.co.nz