

The best way to help your baby develop is to encourage them to move from birth. There are lots of ways your baby can move and be active from birth and this is called 'active play'.

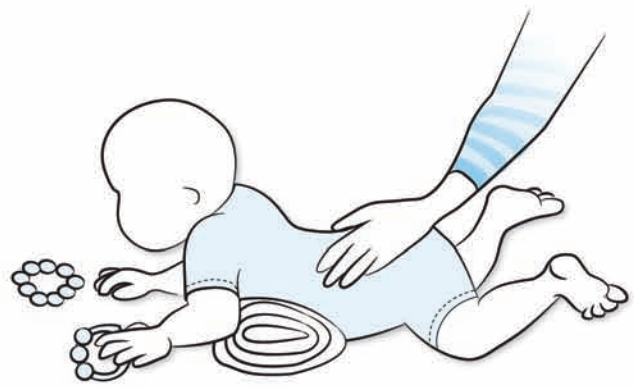
An important part of active play for newborn babies is spending short periods of time on their tummy EVERY DAY.

Time on the tummy is important for your baby to help:

- develop strong neck, shoulder and back muscles
- control their head, reach out, roll and move around
- prevent them developing a flat head
- prepare your baby for crawling, rolling and moving on their own.

Getting started

Playtime on the tummy is one of the first ways your baby can move and be active.



- Remove wraps or blankets to let your baby move freely.
- Lay your baby on their tummy on a blanket or mat in a safe space.
- Place a toy in front of your baby to look at, reach for and play with.
- A rolled up towel under your baby's chest will support your baby and make it easier to lift their head.
- Prop your baby onto their elbows over the towel. Keep both arms forward and in front of the towel.

What to look for

- If your baby's head drops to the floor watch and wait for 1-2 seconds. Your baby should turn their head to the side to breathe.
- Your baby is only little and will tire easily. Look for tired signs (head down, rubbing eyes, yawning). Stop and give your baby a rest by rolling them onto their side to play or pick up for a cuddle.



Other tummy play ideas

There are lots of babies that fuss or start to cry when they are put onto their tummy. This is because they are not use to the position, and it can be hard work for them.

If a baby is not put onto their tummy to play from the first days of life, it may take time for them to enjoy spending time on their tummy.

LYING ON YOUR CHEST



LYING ACROSS YOUR LAP



If your baby isn't happy on the floor, lay them on your chest or across your lap. Your baby will enjoy being close to you and looking into your face while still being on their tummy.

Helpful hints for tummy play

- Try a variety of tummy positions while your baby is awake, alert and happy.
- Start for short periods of time and slowly increase the time your baby spends on their tummy as they grow. This can be from 10 seconds to 10 minutes.
- Play with your baby, get down low, smile, talk or sing a song.
- Lay your baby on a towel or blanket in case they bring up a little milk.
- If your baby suffers with reflux, they may find playing on the floor unsettling. Laying them on your chest or on a pillow across your lap may be a more comfortable position.

REMEMBER, always stay with your baby when they are on their tummy.

REMEMBER:

- There is a link between babies sleeping on their tummies and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- If your baby falls asleep on their tummy, turn them over immediately to sleep on their back.

For further information about SIDS, talk to your doctor or Child and Family Health Nurse at your local Community Health Centre or visit www.sidsandkids.org