

Baby Tummy Time Guide



Expert guidance to successfully
introduce tummy time.

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Welcome!

Becoming a parent is one of life's most beautiful experiences—and sometimes one of the most overwhelming. You and your baby are learning together, finding your rhythm, and growing side by side. In the early weeks and months, tummy time can feel challenging for many babies (and for parents, too). If you have ever felt unsure about where to begin, you are not alone. Learning how to make tummy time feel comfortable, supportive, and realistic for your baby takes effort.

After more than 25 years of professional experience working with babies and families, my own experience as a mother of four, and a careful review of current research, I created this simple, easy-to-follow tummy time guide for you.

My goal is to make tummy time feel less stressful, more achievable, and easier to understand—without pressure or perfection.

I hope this guide gives you confidence, reassurance, and practical ideas you can gently incorporate into everyday life with your baby.

Warmly,

Beata Prysycz

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- Following your baby's cues - *Go, Pause, Stop*
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- Change it up - Environmental environment
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What is Tummy Time?

Tummy time is the practice of placing your baby on their stomach while they are awake and closely supervised. It acts as their first "workout" and is essential for building the neck, shoulder, and back muscles needed for future milestones like rolling, sitting, and crawling.



Why is Tummy Time so Important?

! Opportunity to Explore the World

- Helps babies begin reaching toward objects
- Encourages curiosity, movement, and early exploration
- Gives babies opportunities to problem-solve through movement and play

! Supports Brain Development & Learning
Infants experience a profound connection between movement and learning.

! Boosts Cognitive Development

- Encourages exploration and early problem-solving
 - Supports attention, focus, and learning through movement experiences
 - Helps strengthen neural pathways that connect the brain and body

! Builds Confidence

- Small successes – lifting the head, reaching for a toy, turning toward a voice – help babies develop confidence and body awareness.

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! Protects Head Shape

Since babies spend a lot of time sleeping on their backs (which is safest for sleep), tummy time provides important opportunities to reduce pressure on the back of the head.

! Helps Prevent Flat Spots

- Reduces constant pressure on one area of the skull
- Supports healthy head shape development (positional plagiocephaly prevention)

! Encourages Bonding and Connection

Tummy time is not only developmental—it is relational.

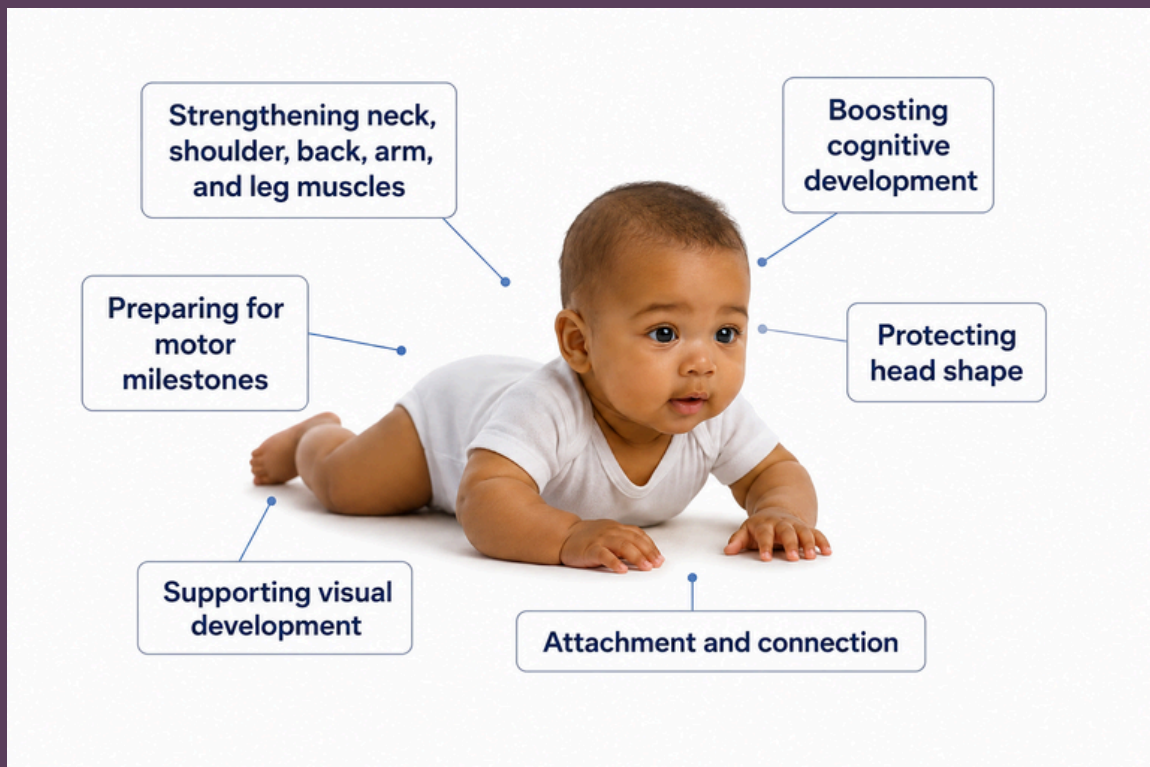
! A Time to Connect

- Creates opportunities for face-to-face interaction
- Encourages talking, singing, smiling, and gentle touch
 - Helps babies feel safe, supported, and connected

Your baby does not need tummy time to look perfect— they simply need opportunities to practice, little by little, every day.

Remember: tummy time can begin gently from the very beginning — on your chest, across your lap, during cuddles, carrying, and later on the floor. Every moment counts.

Progress over perfection. Connection over pressure. Small moments accumulate beautifully.



Following Your Baby's Cues

When you notice your baby's cues and respond to them, your baby feels safe, understood, and secure. This early connection forms the foundation for their emotional, social, and physical development.

Through simple everyday interactions - holding your baby close, cuddling, talking to them, and sharing eye contact - you're creating a secure base from which they feel confident to move, explore, and learn.

Tummy time should feel enjoyable and connected, not like a workout or something to push through. Reading your baby's cues helps tummy time go more smoothly: you'll know when to continue, when to pause, and when it's time for a cuddle instead. There's no "perfect" session - just small, positive moments that support your baby's development and your relationship together.



GO –

≧ *“I’m ready to engage”* ≦

Signs your baby is saying this:

- Bright, wide eyes & steady gaze at you
- Smiling or happy facial expression
- Smooth, relaxed movements of arms, legs or body
- Hands reaching out toward you or toys

What to do:

- ✔ Offer interaction – talk, smile, play, include your baby in the moment while they’re calm.

PAUSE –

≧ *“I need a slower pace or change”* ≦

Signs your baby is saying this:

- Turning head away or shifting body away
- Yawning, rubbing eyes, jerky movements
- Losing interest in toys/people, staring off/fussing
- Sucking fingers, subtle restlessness

What to do:

- ✔ Lower the intensity – switch to a gentler activity, reduce stimulus, give your baby a moment to reset.

STOP –

≧ *“I’m overwhelmed and need comfort”* ≦

Signs your baby is saying this:

- Crying, vocal distress, arching back
- Squirming or kicking away
- Grimacing or frowning, showing discomfort
- Stiff or limp posture, body language of stress

What to do:

- ✔ Pause completely – pick up, soothe, change position, offer a break. Wait until your baby is calm before resuming.



Every baby is unique.



Learning their cues builds trust and connection.

When Do We Start?

It's safe to start tummy time from day one.

But if you or your baby need time to recover, settle in, or simply get to know each other, it's completely okay to begin a little later.

You can start tummy time whenever you feel ready - whether that's on the day your baby is born, your first day at home, or after a few weeks. What matters most is that it feels manageable and comfortable for both of you.

Remember: Tummy time is an important part of your baby's development, but your relationship comes first. A strong, secure connection between you and your baby creates the foundation for everything that follows - including how your baby moves, explores, and learns.



How Long Does My Baby Need?

There's no strict rule - and no research that tells us an exact amount of tummy time needed for each age. What matters most is following your baby's cues, not a timer.

- Extend tummy time when your baby is calm, happy, and engaged
- Pause or stop if they fuss, tire, or turn away
- Try again later when they're settled and alert

It's perfectly okay to start with small, frequent moments across the day. 30-60 seconds is enough to begin with. As your baby becomes more comfortable, you can gradually build up the time.

Not every day will look the same - babies have hungry days, tired days, growing days, clingy days, and settled days. That's normal.

The goal isn't a perfect routine. It's simply offering lots of little opportunities and keeping tummy time positive and enjoyable.

To help you gently increase tummy time as your baby grows, I've included a simple guide on the next page - not something you need to follow perfectly, just an idea to support you both.

GRADUALLY BUILD YOUR TIME

3-5 TIMES A DAY

1



START

- 30-60 SECONDS
- 3-5 TIMES A DAY

2



INCREASE TO

- 2-5 MINUTES
- 3-5 TIMES A DAY

3



THEN

- 5-10 MINUTES
- 5-10 TIMES A DAY

4



NEXT

- 5-15 MINUTES
- 5-10 TIMES A DAY

5



GOAL

- 5-30 MINUTES
- 5-15 TIMES A DAY

Remember - increase your baby's tummy time as their endurance grows. Follow their cues. Everyday will look different and that's ok.

Positions for comfort and success

Changing your baby's position throughout the day encourages movement, sensory exploration, visual development, and body awareness. Different positions offer new opportunities for your baby to strengthen muscles, build coordination, and experience the world from a new perspective.

Explore the tummy time positions below and see which ones feel most comfortable and supportive for your baby.



Chest-to-Chest

- Recline back in a chair or on the bed with your baby resting on your chest.
- Your face and your voice is their encouragement - smile, blow raspberries, talk, hum, or sing softly.

To make it easier - sit more upright, and use your hand to place gentle pressure on your baby's bottom.



Over-the-Shoulder Cuddle

- Hold your baby high on your shoulder so they can lift their head to look around.

Time in the baby carrier is also tummy time! If your baby is awake and moving their head side to side, looking around, this also counts as tummy time.



Over-the-Forearm Hold

- Lay your baby along your forearm.
- Support your baby with your other hand as you walk or sway gently.
- Great for colicky or fussy babies who prefer movement and closeness.

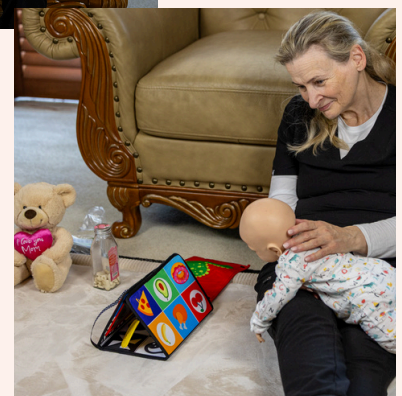
You can position your baby either way along your forearm (head towards your elbow, or head towards your hand) - whatever feels best to you.



Over-the-Lap

- Lay your baby across your lap. You could be sitting on the floor, or on a chair.
- Rock or gently pat for comfort.
- Perfect if siblings want to join in.

To make it easier - lift or cross your leg to elevate your baby's head and body higher.



Facing Up & Out of the Lap

- Sit with your knees bent and your baby facing outward, looking out over your knees.
- Gently rock side to side or bounce slightly while chatting.

To make it easier - Bend your knees up to elevate your baby's head and body.



Rolled Towel Under the Chest

- Place a small rolled towel under your baby's chest and shoulders.
- Lie down directly in front of your baby for face-to-face play, or place a mirror at eye level.

The towel can be horse shoe shape, or straight.



Wedge

- Make a wedge by folding a towel, or use a pillow.
- Lie down directly in front of your baby for face-to-face play, or place a mirror at eye level.



Gym Ball

- Place your baby on a gym ball.
- Support your baby's hips and tilt forward and back, and side to side slowly.
- Keep movements small and smooth
- comfort always comes first.



Tips to Get Started



Begin on you, not the floor.

Babies naturally feel safer and more connected on their parent's chest. This is the easiest and most comforting way to introduce tummy-time.



Use an incline for early success.

Start with your baby on an incline—on your chest, over a rolled towel, or on a wedge. Elevating their chest and shoulders makes lifting their head easier.



Provide gentle support at the hips.

Rest your hands on your baby's bottom or thighs in the early days. This gives stability and helps them push up more easily.



Place their forearms under their shoulders.

Positioning their arms forward helps your baby lift and steady their head, making tummy-time more successful and more comfortable.

Keeping Your Baby Motivated

Tummy time is easier when your baby feels calm, safe, and connected to you. Your face, voice, touch, or a familiar sibling can help your baby feel relaxed and motivated to stay longer. Babies learn best when they are happy and relaxed – making tummy time a wonderful opportunity to explore, move, and grow.

Here are some simple play ideas to make tummy time more fun and engaging for your baby.

Face-to-Face Play

- Lie down in front of your baby so they can see your face.
- Smile, blink slowly, copy their noises - your face is their favourite thing to look at.



Chatting + Gentle Narration

- Talk softly about what your baby is doing:
- “You’re lifting your head,” “I see you looking over here.”
- Your calm voice helps them feel safe and interested.



Singing or Humming

- Use simple nursery rhymes or gentle humming.
- Rhythm helps your baby stay relaxed and encourages them to lift and listen.

Mirrors for Motivation

- Place a baby-safe mirror at eye level.
- Tap the mirror, pop your face into the reflection, point to “the baby” they see, and show your baby lots of expressions.



Sibling Play

- Invite siblings to sit close and interact gently.
- They can read a board book, show a toy, or make soft animal sounds.

After-Bath Warm Tummy Play

- Lay baby on a warm towel after a bath (dry and comfortable).
- Relaxed babies often tolerate tummy time longer.

Slow Toy Sweep

- Move a soft toy slowly from one side to the other in their visual range. Also helps develop visual tracking.



After Nappy Change Mini Moments

- Try 20-40 seconds of tummy time after each nappy change. Short, predictable bursts help build comfort and interest without overwhelm.

High-Contrast Visuals

- Place a single black-and-white card or a simple toy in front of your baby.
- One clear visual target is enough to capture attention.



Book-Fort Tummy Play

- Create a small half-circle of picture books or high-contrast cards around your baby. Encourages calm visual play while gently building endurance.

Peekaboo

- Slowly reveal your face with a muslin cloth. Encourages little lifts and adds gentle anticipation.



Change it Up - Environmental Enrichment

Your baby learns best when they experience different sights, sounds, textures, and spaces - this is called environmental enrichment. Changing where tummy time happens helps to keep your baby curious and engaged, and also keeps it feeling fresh and manageable for you. A new surface, different lighting, a soft breeze outdoors, or simply being in another room can spark your baby's interest and encourage longer, happier play. Small changes make a big difference in how your baby explores, connects, and learns during tummy time.

Try:

- A different room or mat
- Textures like picnic rugs, towels, or playmats
- Outdoor tummy time on a blanket
- Toys at varying heights



Toy Ideas

Keep in Mind: For 0–3 months, simple is best. One toy at a time helps your baby stay calm, focused, and engaged. Your face, voice, and touch will always be the most powerful “toy” during tummy time.

High-Contrast Cards

- Black-and-white or simple geometric patterns help your baby focus and track movement.

Baby-Safe Mirror

- Your baby loves looking at faces - even their own. Great for encouraging head lifts and visual attention.

Soft, Crinkly Cloths

- Small muslin cloths or crinkly fabric offer gentle sound + easy reach. Perfect for peekaboo, patting, or exploring texture.

Rattles

- Light rattles with a gentle sound encourage your baby to turn toward the noise. Keep movement slow and predictable.

Fold-Out Board Books

- Place a simple board book opened upright in front of your baby. Bold pictures or faces help keep their attention longer.

Textured Play Mats

- A mat with gentle textures (ribbed, quilted, raised dots) gives your baby something interesting to feel as they shift and wriggle.

Soft Sensory Balls

- Very soft balls with slight texture (not rolling away quickly) encourages visual tracking and early reaching.

Light-Up or Contrast Toys (Used Sparingly)

- Slow, gentle lights or simple contrast toys can be motivating - just avoid overstimulating, fast-flashing toys.

Family Photos (Laminated or Card Style)

- Your baby loves looking at familiar faces. Set up a few photos in a small semicircle to explore visually.

Simple Musical Toy (Very Gentle Sounds)

- A soft chime or gentle musical toy placed at eye level can help with head-turning and attention.

Everyday Household Toys Work Too

Soft scarves or ribbons

Wave slowly side-to-side for visual tracking.

A non-breakable mirror from home

Prop it securely in front of baby.

A spoon or small kitchen whisk

Held still in front - babies love shiny reflections.

Coloured lids or coasters

Simple shapes with bold colours encourage looking and reaching.

A softly patterned tea towel

Creates a gentle sensory surface or visual interest.

Tummy Time Challenges & Gentle Solutions

“My baby cries every time I put them on their tummy.”

- ✓ Start tummy time on you, not the floor - chest-to-chest, on your lap or over your shoulder.
- ✓ Try side-lying or using a small towel under their chest for support.
- ✓ Stay close - your face, voice, and touch are the comfort they need.
- ✓ Keep it short and positive. End on a calm note rather than pushing through tears.

“They only last a minute or two.”

- ✓ That’s okay - short, frequent sessions build endurance.
- ✓ Try again later when your baby is fed, rested, and alert.
- ✓ Gradually build up time as your baby’s strength improves.

“They just lick the mat or keep their head down.”

- ✓ Early on, this is completely normal. Head control takes time.
- ✓ Add gentle motivation - talk, sing, or use a mirror or high-contrast cards at eye level.
- ✓ Celebrate small improvements like brief head lifts or turning to sound.

“They seem uncomfortable or frustrated.”

- ✓ Check the surface - choose something firm but soft, like a play mat or picnic rug.
- ✓ Support under the chest with a towel to make it easier.
- ✓ Do tummy time after a nappy change or short nap, not right after a big feed.

“We forget to fit tummy time in.”

- ✓ Think of it as part of your day, not an extra task.
- ✓ A few ideas:
 - After every nappy change
 - Before bath time
 - While playing on the bed in the morning
- ✓ Every short, gentle attempt helps build strength and comfort.

“They roll straight onto their back.”

- ✓ Try using your arm, a small rolled towel, or toys at eye level to keep them engaged.
- ✓ Side-lying play is a great bridge toward longer tummy time.
- (Also - congratulations, your baby is rolling!)

“They have reflux or discomfort.”

- ✓ Try chest-to-chest or over-the-shoulder positions to keep baby upright.
- ✓ Avoid tummy time right after feeds.

**Check in with your doctor for advice on feeds and medication*

When to Check In

You know your baby best. If something doesn't feel right, or if you have a concern you can't shake, check in with your doctor, child health nurse, or paediatric physiotherapist.

Below are some signs that mean it's worth seeking advice.

Concerns with Vision or Hearing

- Not turning to your voice or sounds
- Not startling to loud noises
- Not fixing or following faces or toys with their eyes
- Keeping eyes consistently crossed or one eye drifting

Baby Feels “Too Floppy” or “Too Stiff”

- Very little movement of arms or legs
- Feels extremely floppy when held
- Very stiff limbs or arching often during play or tummy time

Preferring One Side

- Always looking to one side only
- Flat spot developing on one side of the head
- Using one arm or leg noticeably more than the other
- Trouble turning head equally to both sides

Developmental Regressions

- Losing a skill they previously had
- Becoming less alert or less interactive over time
- Sudden reduction in movement or activity

Not Lifting Their Head in Tummy Time by 3 Months

- If your baby is not lifting their head at all, or seems extremely distressed every time they're placed on their tummy, a check-in is recommended.

Other Red Flags

- Is very difficult to settle and rarely has calm, alert periods
- Doesn't move both sides of the body equally
- Is unusually quiet, sleepy, or hard to wake for feeds
- Has ongoing feeding difficulties that affect alertness or play

World Health Organization (WHO) Motor Milestones

The World Health Organization (WHO) has published information about typical motor development milestones in babies.

The 50th percentile means that around half of babies at that age are able to do a particular skill.

The 90th percentile means that most babies (9 out of 10) are able to do that skill by that age.

Every baby develops at their own pace, and some variation is completely normal. However, if your baby is not yet showing a skill by the 90th percentile age, or if you have concerns about how your baby is moving, feeding, or using their body, it is a good idea to speak with your healthcare professional for guidance and support.

MOTOR MILESTONES

WHO Percentiles: 50th & 90th

Sitting Without Support

50th: 6 months

90th: 7.5 months

Standing With Assistance

50th: 7.5 months

90th: 9.5 months

Hands-and-Knees Crawling

50th: 8.3 months

90th: 10.5 months

Walking With Assistance

50th: 9 months

90th: 11 months

Standing Alone

50th: 10.8 months

90th: 13.5 months

Walking Alone

50th: 12 months

90th: 14.5 months

Source: World Health Organization Motor Development Milestones



SLEEPING Little Angels

CONCIERGE POSTPARTUM DOULA
NEURO-PLAY DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT
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Heading You're Doing Better Than You Think

Tummy time is not about perfection. It is about small, consistent moments of movement, connection, and exploration throughout your baby's day.

Some babies enjoy tummy time right away. Others need more support, shorter sessions, or different positions before it feels comfortable. Both are completely normal.

Remember:

- A few minutes at a time still counts
- Connection matters more than “minutes completed”
- A calm, supported baby learns best

• Babies learn up to 400 times faster when they feel safe, happy, and relaxed

The goal is not to “push through” tummy time — it is to help your baby gradually build strength, confidence, body awareness, breathing skills, visual tracking, and early motor patterns through play.

Always supervise tummy time when your baby is awake and remember: **Back to Sleep, Tummy to Play.**

If you have concerns about your baby's movement, head shape, muscle tightness, feeding, or development, speak with your pediatrician or developmental professional.

You know your baby best.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your parenting journey.

With love and support,

Beata Pryszcz

**Advanced Certified Postpartum Doula | Advanced Newborn Care Specialist
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Developmental Baby massage Teacher | Owner of Sleeping Little Angels LLC**

Recommended Toys & Resources

0–3 Months Developmental Toys:

[Add Link Here]

3–6 Months Developmental Toys:

[Add Link Here]

Recommended Tummy Time Mat:

[Add Link Here]

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