



Tummy Time

Britain Development Physical Therapists



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A hospital department of AdventHealth Shawnee Mission

Objectives

- Understand the importance of tummy time
- Examples of equipment that can be used for tummy time
- Examples of variations of tummy time



Why is tummy time important?

Importance

- Development
 - Promotes strengthening and development of the neck, shoulders, back and hips
 - Helps to build and strengthen the muscles needed for rolling, sitting and crawling
 - Prevents muscle tightness in the neck that could lead to flat spots on the head
- Head Shape
 - Babies spend lots of time on their backs (i.e. sleeping) which causes increased pressure on the back of their head putting them at risk for flat spots
 - When your baby is awake working on tummy time allows them to decrease the amount of time that pressure is sustained on the back of their head



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Tummy Time Guidelines

Things to Remember

- Always supervise your child
- Tummy time is a great bonding activity with your child
- It should be fun!
- Variation is key!
 - It keeps your child from getting bored
 - It provides them with different levels of difficulty



Tummy Time Play Ideas

Positioning and Tummy Time

- Examples of places and equipment that you can use:
 - On the floor
 - On your chest
 - Over your lap
 - Use a boppy pillow
 - Towel roll under the chest
 - Airplane game
 - Holding your child under their arms, gently lift them up above your head
 - Can be done with the parent in standing or when laying down
- How you can help your child during tummy time?
 - Give your child support at their shoulders and elbows to help them keep their arms in position while they focus on lifting their head
 - Hold their bottom down to act as counter pressure to the weight of their head
 - Change the equipment you are using and play with inclined surfaces



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Sensory Play and Tummy Time

- Use a baking sheet with a small edge and add any of the following
 - Rice, water, beans, shaving cream or water beads
- Put paint in a plastic bag and allow your child to explore it with less mess 😊
- Use tissue paper or crinkle toys to add auditory and tactile input
- Use music to add auditory input
- Use a mirror
 - Lay the mirror flat so the child is able to see themselves
 - Have it propped up in front of the child so that they must lift their head to see themselves
- Therapy ball
 - Movement of your child on the ball provides them with vestibular input
 - Vestibular input provides them with information about where their body is in space



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Therapy Ball and Tummy Time

- Provides an opportunity for sensory exploration
 - Gently bounce the child up and down
 - Rock the ball side to side and back and forth
 - Quick rocking/movement is more arousing
 - Slower movement is more calming
- Provides variation in strengthening
 - When you rock the child back on the ball, towards you, there is less gravity working against them making tummy time easier
 - When you rock the child forward on the ball, further away from you, there is more gravity working against your child making tummy time harder
- Provides opportunity for assisted reaching
 - When rocking from side to side have the child reach for an object in front of them
 - Examples: Use suction cup toys, have another person hold an object in front of the child



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What do I do if my child does not like tummy time?!

Strategies to Increase Tolerance to Tummy Time

- Offer tummy time more often for less time
 - Example: 10x/day for 30-60 seconds with a happy kiddo is more beneficial than trying to tough out 10 minutes with an unhappy kiddo
- If flat on the tummy is too hard
 - Lessen gravity by angling them with their head upward by propping them up on something or adjusting the surface that they are on
 - Examples: Use your chest, therapy ball with the kiddo closer to you, on a boppy pillow, use a towel under their chest
 - On a level surface you can place your hand on their bottom to offer counter pressure for the weight of their head



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Remember to have fun and don't be afraid to get creative!

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