

TUMMY TIME

“WHAT PARENTS REALLY NEED TO KNOW”



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For more information check out my website!

www.motorskillsmatter.com

Why Tummy Time Deserves Attention

1

BECAUSE BABIES NOW SLEEP SAFELY ON THEIR BACKS AND SPEND MORE TIME IN CARRIERS AND SEATS, THEY GET FEWER CHANCES TO BUILD STRENGTH THROUGH MOVEMENT. TUMMY TIME HELPS FILL THAT GAP AND SUPPORTS HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

2

TUMMY TIME CAN START RIGHT AWAY, EVEN ON DAY ONE WITH YOUR BABY LYING ON YOUR CHEST.. ALL TUMMY TIME MUST BE SUPERVISED, BUT YOUR BABY DOES NOT NEED TO BE FULLY ALERT FOR IT TO "COUNT." BEGIN WITH VERY SHORT PERIODS (30 SECONDS-2 MINUTES) AND GRADUALLY BUILD UNTIL YOUR BABY IS GETTING 60-80 MINUTES TOTAL PER DAY BY 3-4 MONTHS. THESE MINUTES CAN BE BROKEN UP THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND CAN INCLUDE CHEST-TO-CHEST, LAP, PILLOW-ASSISTED, AND FLOOR TUMMY TIME





IMMEDIATELY DAY ONE

- *Tummy time starts with body-to-body contact (baby lying on your chest or stomach). This counts and is often the most tolerated form for brand-new babies.*
- *Off-the-floor tummy time (on a firm, safe surface) can begin within the first days of life for short, supported intervals*



TUMMY TIME ISN'T JUST ABOUT LIFTING THE HEAD, IT'S ALSO ABOUT LEARNING HOW TO REST.

In early tummy time, babies should be able to turn their head to either side and rest it comfortably on the surface, even if only for short moments. This ability to lift and relax supports comfort, breathing, and balanced muscle development.

WHY RESTING THE HEAD MATTERS

- ALLOWS BABIES TO TAKE BREAKS AND TOLERATE TUMMY TIME LONGER
- ENCOURAGES SYMMETRICAL NECK MOVEMENT TO BOTH SIDES
- SUPPORTS CALM BREATHING AND REGULATION
- HELPS PREVENT TENSION FROM BUILDING IN THE NECK, SHOULDERS, AND BACK





SIGNS YOUR BABY MAY BE HAVING DIFFICULTY RESTING THEIR HEAD

- If a baby consistently struggles to relax their head down, parents may notice:
- Always turning the head to one preferred side
- Keeping the head lifted the entire time and becoming upset quickly
- Stiffness or arching through the back or shoulders
- Hands fisted tightly or arms stuck back instead of resting forward
- Fussing that improves immediately when tummy time ends

Helpful Tips

Try supporting your baby's chest or shoulders slightly and gently guiding the head to rest on both sides during tummy time. Comfort and relaxation come before longer durations.



A side preference or limited neck mobility



Increased tension through the body



Fatigue or reduced endurance



Needing more support (chest-to-chest, wedge, or rolled towel)

This doesn't mean something is "wrong" it simply means the baby may need gentler positioning, shorter sessions, or extra support as they build comfort and strength. Resting is part of learning. Lifting and relaxing work together.

The Powerful Benefits of Tummy Time

#1 Strengthens the entire body

Tummy time is the foundation for early strength:

- Builds neck, shoulder, arm, back, and core muscles
- Prepares the body for rolling, sitting, crawling, and pulling to stand
- Improves head control and postural stability

#2 Promotes healthy head shape

By reducing time spent on the back, tummy time helps:

- Prevent flattening of the head (plagiocephaly)
- Support symmetrical neck movement (helps prevent torticollis)
- Encourage balanced motor development on both sides of the body

#3 Supports sensory + visual development

Being on their belly helps babies:

- Learn to shift weight and use both sides of the body
- Strengthen the visual system (tracking, depth perception, looking up/out)
- Build proprioceptive awareness through pressure on hands, arms, and trunk

#4 Enhances early brain development

Movement on the tummy activates and integrates:

- Midline control
- Vestibular pathways (balance + body awareness)
- Coordination between right and left sides of the brain
- Foundations for later learning, attention, organization & planning

The Powerful Benefits of Tummy Time

#5 Boosts emotional resilience + frustration tolerance

Tummy time naturally builds:

- Perseverance and tolerance for “just-right challenge”
- The ability to manage mild frustration safely
- Confidence as babies discover they can lift, push, and move

#6 Encourages purposeful play and exploration

On their belly, babies are more motivated to:

- Reach for toys
- Shift weight
- Push up on hands
- Explore their environment in a meaningful way

This is where early problem-solving and motor curiosity begin

#7 Helps digestion + comfort

Gentle pressure on the belly can:

- Reduce gas
- Support digestion
- Ease mild reflux symptoms (for babies who tolerate it)

#8 Supports social + bonding moments

Tummy time creates opportunities for:

- Face-to-face engagement
- Playful interaction
- Early communication
- Building secure attachment

Chest-to-chest tummy time is especially powerful for bonding

TUMMY TIME

Tummy time strengthens your baby's body, shapes their head, supports brain and sensory development, boosts confidence, and lays the foundation for every major milestone.

Must baby be "awake and alert"?

No that's an overly strict and outdated phrasing.

- Baby must be awake and supervised.
- Baby does not need to be fully alert or "active."
- Light, drowsy, calm, or quiet-awake states are all safe and count.

Rule of thumb:

If eyes are open and you are supervising → it counts as tummy time





SAFETY REMINDER

- ✓ Never do tummy time while baby is sleeping.
- ✓ Always supervise closely.
- ✓ Keep airways clear, head to the side, shoulders supported as needed



HOW MUCH TOTAL TUMMY TIME PER DAY?

Your recollection is right:

Current guidance: 60–80 minutes total per day (by 3 months is ideal; by 4 months is expected)

This includes all forms on the floor, on your chest, over a pillow, over your lap, etc

RECOMMENDED MINUTES BY AGE

These are realistic, developmentally sound targets that match clinical practice and parent tolerability (and they're consistent with APTA Pediatric PT best practices).

Newborn (0–1 month)

Goal: 10–15 minutes total per day

Broken into very small sets (30 seconds to 2 minutes).

Most of this may be chest-to-chest.

1–2 months

Goal: 20–30 minutes total per day

Still broken up into 1–3 minute intervals.

Add lap, poppy, or wedge--assisted tummy time.

Using a Tummy Time Wedge (0–3 months)

Tummy time on a wedge gently lifts your baby's chest, making it easier to breathe, lift their head, and bring their arms forward.

Why it's helpful:

A wedge makes it easier for babies to push up and feel successful, while supporting their whole body in a more stable position. Unlike soft pillows, a wedge keeps the spine supported instead of letting the body sink or curve.



RECOMMENDED MINUTES BY AGE

2–3 months

Goal: 45–60 minutes total per day

Now baby can usually do 3–5 minute intervals on the floor.

3–4 months

Goal: 60–80 minutes total per day

Baby should tolerate 10–15 minute sessions fairly well.

(This matches your memory – 15 minutes by ~4 months.)

4+ months

Continue building beyond 80 minutes if tolerated tummy time naturally blends into rolling, pivoting, belly scooting, and crawling prep

Down Before Up

As important as tummy time is, it's only one part of healthy floor play. Time on the back, tummy, and side-lying all help babies build strength, coordination, and comfort moving in different ways. When babies spend time down on the floor – before being rushed upright they develop the foundations that make later milestones easier, steadier, and more confident.



Let's Get Started!

1:1 VIRTUAL CONSULTATION SESSIONS

Encourage your baby's growth with a customized 30-minute virtual gross motor session guided by a pediatric physical therapist. During our time together, we'll dive into playful activities and positioning techniques designed to support early movement, build developing skills, and help your little one reach important motor milestones. After the session, you'll receive a comprehensive follow-up email packed with personalized exercises, expert guidance, and valuable resources to confidently continue nurturing your child's progress at home.

FOR MORE OPTIONS [CLICK HERE!](#)

"When we understand how children move,
we understand how they grow and we give
them the confidence to reach their fullest
potential."

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