Tummy playtime

Why does my baby need tummy time?

When your baby is born they will spend a lot of time on their back:

- When sleeping
- When feeding
- In the car
- In the stroller
- During nappy changing.

To help develop all their muscles your baby needs to be placed in a range of positions. Lying on their tummy will help them develop the neck, shoulder and back muscle strength they need to control their head, reach out, roll and move around. Tummy time also helps prevent the back of your baby's head from flattening.

What happens when my baby is on their tummy?

When your baby is born they have reflexes that control their arms and legs when they are in different positions. When placed on their tummy babies automatically turn their head to the side so they can breathe and their limbs are tucked close to their body. Having their arms tucked under their chest helps them to balance and lift their head. The pictures show how tummy time changes over the first few months.

When should my baby have tummy time?

When your baby is awake place them on their tummy two to four times a day. This can be done from the time they are born. The best time is when they are alert and not crying. Try some tummy time after their bath or after burping. Remember to place them on a towel or small blanket as they may bring up a little milk.

How long should tummy time be?

During the first few weeks when sleeping and eating are high priorities for your baby, one to two minutes on their tummy is enough. Being physically active even for a short time may help them to sleep better. As they grow older they will be awake for longer and have more time to lie on their tummy to play.

What if my baby doesn't like tummy time?

- Check they are not hungry or tired
- Try laying them on your chest. Your baby will enjoy being close to you
- Lie in front of them so they can see your face
- Place their shoulders and arms over a rolled towel to make it easier for them to lift their head.