TUMMY TIME is an important activity for your baby’s development and is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Because the AAP recommends that babies sleep on their backs for safety reasons, babies need enough supervised Tummy Time during the hours they are awake to strengthen head, neck, and upper body muscles. Tummy Time helps to build the strength and coordination needed for rolling over, crawling, reaching, and playing. Remember that all babies benefit from Tummy Time, including newborns.

Pediatric occupational therapy practitioners promote a child’s development through activities such as Tummy Time, and they can help make Tummy Time a regular part of your daily routine. The following tips are from occupational therapy practitioners working with babies on Tummy Time.

Precautions:
- Consult with your health care provider first.
- Make sure your baby is alert and awake.
- Always supervise your baby.
- Place your baby on a safe and firm surface.

Consider these activity tips:
- Begin with 3 to 5 minutes per session, working up to a total of 40 to 60 minutes daily. Tummy Time can be done in short sessions throughout the day, based on your baby’s tolerance and needs.
- Pay attention to signs that your baby is getting tired, such as crying or resting his face on the surface, and be sure to end Tummy Time before your baby becomes fatigued.
- Incorporate Tummy Time into the activities you’re already doing with your baby, such as towel drying after bath time, changing diapers, or applying lotion.
- When burping your baby, try laying her across your lap on her tummy.
- It is never too early to begin to read to your baby, and Tummy Time is a great opportunity for storytelling.

If you want to:
- Make Tummy Time part of your family’s daily routine.
- Increase your baby’s ability to reach and play.

Photo courtesy of Anna Zachry.
If you want to:

**Position your baby to enjoy Tummy Time.**

- Roll up a thin towel or blanket to make a bolster that will provide extra support during Tummy Time. Place the bolster under your baby’s chest, and position his arms over the roll, with his hands stretching out in front of it. Your baby’s chin should always be positioned in front of the bolster so that the airway is not blocked.
- Always supervise your baby during bolstering.
- Be sure your baby distributes his weight evenly on both sides of his body while on his tummy to strengthen muscles equally.
- Limit the time your baby is constrained in swings, exersaucers, and other baby gear, and encourage active play to strengthen his muscles through Tummy Time.

**Engage your baby’s senses.**

- Place a plastic mirror in front of your baby so she will be interested in lifting her head to look at her own reflection.
- Use blankets or towels with different textures and colors so your baby can experience different visual and touch sensations (e.g., switching between a terry-cloth towel and a fleece blanket).

**Consider alternatives to “typical” Tummy Time.**

- A great way to carry out Tummy Time is to place your baby on your stomach or chest while you are awake and in a reclined position on a chair, bed, or floor. This is also a great way to begin Tummy Time with a newborn.

**Positions for Caregiver:**

- Side-lying is another positioning option. Position your baby on a blanket on his side, and support his back with your hand or use a small rolled up blanket. Make sure both of your baby’s arms are in front of him, and slightly bend his hips and knees so your baby is comfortable. This position can also aid in reaching and playing.

**Positions for Baby:**

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*Need More Information?*

Pediatric occupational therapy practitioners promote the participation of all children and their families in everyday activities (or occupations), including Tummy Time, to facilitate development. When there is a particular area of concern, the occupational therapist can create an individualized strategy based on the child’s and family’s specific needs.

Occupational therapy practitioners work with children in their homes, at school, in private practice, at children’s hospitals, and in other community locations, providing interventions that are individualized, appropriate, and effective. Ask your pediatrician for a recommendation, or look online to find an occupational therapist in your area. You can find additional information through the American Occupational Therapy Association at www.aota.org.

*Developed by Christa Pumerantz for the American Occupational Therapy Association.*