

Infants Need Tummy Time While Awake

Physical therapists tell parents that infants must have tummy time everyday. In a recent survey, therapists found an increase in the number of infants who have motor delays. These infants spent too much time on their backs while awake.

In 1992, doctors urged parents to put babies to sleep on their backs. Since then, the deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) had a dramatic decrease. Now, some new parents are afraid to put babies on their stomachs — even when they are awake.

It is still important to put babies to sleep on their backs. However, babies need to spend time on their stomachs while awake.

New infant car seats also serve as infant carriers. Many of these carriers fasten directly into strollers and swings. As a result, babies remain in one position — on their back.

Infants who spend long periods of time on their backs may have:

- **Problems with developmental, cognitive and organizational skills.**

These problems can lead to behavioral issues.

- **Eye-tracking problems.** Babies, on their stomachs, learn to look up, down, right and left as they search for their caregiver.
- **Misshapen heads.** In recent years, doctors report a 600% increase in referrals for misshapen heads.
- **Problems with their neck muscles.** Babies need to turn and lift their heads. This prevents tight neck muscles.
- **Delays in rolling, sitting and crawling.** Tummy time helps infants build neck muscles and muscle balance. It helps them learn to crawl.

 For more information on tummy time, log onto www.parenthelpline.org and search the infant section and www.choa.org



Tummy Time Tips

Place your baby on her tummy after every nap, diaper change and feeding.

As your baby gets older, carry him on your hip. Alternate hips often so he looks left and right.

Carry your baby over your shoulder. Support her head. Alternate shoulders.

Hold and carry your baby facing away from you. He will learn to turn his head and watch activities.

Play on the floor with your baby. Place toys on both sides of your baby.

As you dress and diaper your baby, roll her from side to side. Talk to her from different positions so she will turn her head and eyes to search for your face.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week or log onto www.parenthelpline.org