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Easy tips for babies and toddlers from children's physiotherapists

Tummy time: 0 – 3 months

What?

- Tummy time is important, it helps babies get strong so that they can roll, sit and crawl.
- You can start tummy time as soon as your baby is born.
- Tummy time works best when your baby is awake and happy.
- When your baby is on their tummy, someone should be watching them.

When?

- Start with short amounts of time: two to three minutes at a time and build up slowly.
- Try to do it as often as you can during the day.
- When your baby is three months, aim to do at least 30 minutes on their tummy daily and build this up to 60 minutes daily (little and often).
- Avoid tummy time close to feeds and after feeds.

How?



Chest to chest.



Baby on lap.



Carrying face down supported in your arms.



The aim is to get your baby doing tummy time on a mat on the floor.



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Remember!
Back to sleep,
tummy to play

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Tummy time: 3 – 6 months

What?

- Tummy time is important, it helps babies get strong so that they can roll, sit and crawl.
- You can start tummy time as soon as your baby is born.
- Tummy time works best when your baby is awake and happy.
- When your baby is on their tummy, someone should be watching them.

When?

- Do short amounts of tummy time during the day (five to ten minutes at a time and longer, as they get stronger and happier in tummy time position).
- Do tummy time as often as you can during the day and build up to 60 minutes daily by the time your baby is four to six months old.

How?

Tummy time at 3 - 4 months:



Your baby will be able to hold their head up high to look in front.



Your baby will be able to take weight through their forearms and elbows.

Remember!
Back to sleep,
tummy to play



They can follow toys from side to side.



Tummy time:
5 - 6 months

As your baby gets stronger they will start to push through their hands, straightening their elbows. Your baby will play on tummy for more time.



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Rolling

What?

- Rolling helps your baby move from their back to their tummy and back again.

When?

- Babies start rolling from four to six months of age.
- They might accidentally roll from their tummy to their back first.

How?

- Helping your baby roll from their back to their tummy. When your baby starts this, their arm might get 'stuck' under their tummy. If this happens, help them bring it out. When they get stronger they will be able to do this for themselves.

You can help your baby roll by:



Practicing tummy time.



Encouraging your baby to play with their feet.



Helping your baby roll from their back to their tummy.



You can also encourage your baby to roll using toys.



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Sitting

What?

- Most babies sit on their own from six months.

When?

- You can start helping your baby learn to sit from four months.

How?

- You can also help your baby learn to sit using a highchair that leans back and a stroller/buggy with good back support from four months.



When your baby is learning to sit they will need a lot of support. You can help them by placing your hands under their arms.



When your baby gets stronger, they will need less support. You can help them by placing your hands on their ribs and then on their hips.

Tip!

When practicing sitting, encourage your baby to look at books or play with toys.



When your baby starts to sit without support, stay close to them.



When your baby starts to sit you can help them learn to balance by practicing moving sideways, using their hands to stop themselves falling.

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Crawling

What?

- Most babies start to crawl between eight and ten months.

How?



Tummy time will help your baby build the strength to crawl.



At first your baby will learn to balance on one arm and reach with the other.



Then your baby will learn to move in a circle and move backwards. Next they learn to move forwards keeping their tummy on the ground.



Then they will practice balancing in a crawling position. This helps them get stronger.



Your baby will then learn to crawl.

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Moving from lying to sitting

When?

- Babies move from lying to sitting and back, typically from 10 to 11 months, when baby can sit and roll on their own.

How?

- Teaching your baby how to do this: roll your baby onto their side; hold baby's top hand and place your other hand under your baby's lower armpit. Gently lift to sitting from this position.



Moving from lying on back to sitting: Your baby first rolls onto side and uses bottom arm to push up into sitting.



As your baby gets stronger, they will need less help and will do most of the movement themselves.



Your baby will move from sitting to lying on tummy to reach for toys by turning to the side and sliding onto their tummy.

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Moving from sitting to hands and knees

When?

- Babies move from lying to sitting and back, typically from 10 to 11 months, when baby can sit and roll on their own.

How?



Your baby moves from sitting to their hands and knees position.



You can help them with this movement by letting your baby sit on the mat between your legs. Using a toy to motivate the baby and help them reach over your legs, moving onto their hands and knees.



Your baby will soon do this without help

You can also help them to move back to sitting from hands and knees.

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Pulling up to stand

When?

- Pull up to standing with support usually happens between 11 and 13 months.

How?



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Your baby starts in high kneeling chair or couch.



Then moves to half kneeling.



Your baby then pulls to stand using chair/couch for support.



You can help your baby to move from kneeling to half kneeling with support, to standing at the chair.



Tip
To build
strength!

Help your baby to stand from sitting on your lap.

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Baby's first steps

When?

- Babies typically take their first steps between 13 to 16 months.

How?



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First steps.



You can support your baby in standing from around 11 to 13 months.



As they get stronger they will be able to do this on their own holding a chair.



As your baby develops confidence and strength they will walk along and between furniture on their own. You can encourage them to do this using toys.



You can help them build confidence by walking between two people, and increasing the distance.



Encourage your baby to take steps on their own

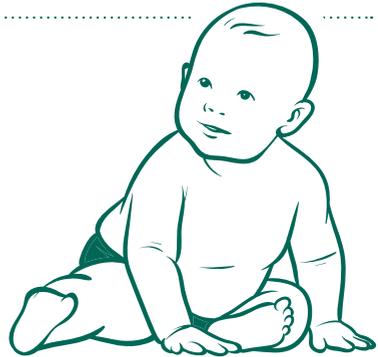
Progress to help your baby walk with a push toy.

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Learn to move!

We have developed a series of short videos to help parents and guardians, help their babies learn how to move and play. Each one of the videos focuses on a different topic and has tips from children's physiotherapists to help get your baby stronger and move better. The videos do not replace physiotherapy for those who need it, but will provide valuable tips on how to help babies get strong and move.



Scan the **QR code** below or type: '**HSE Learn to move: Easy tips for babies and toddlers from children's physiotherapists**' into **YouTube** or watch/click on this link: youtube.com/@HSEMidWest/videos



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Videos

- Tummy time 0-3 months
- Tummy time 3-6 months
- Rolling
- Sitting
- Crawling
- Moving from lying to sitting
- Moving from sitting to hands and knees
- Pulling to stand
- First steps

Click on the video description for video details and printable 'summary sheets'.

This information is to help and not replace advice or consultation with medical professionals. Developed by HSE Mid West Children's Physiotherapists. The 'Learn to Move: Easy Tips for Babies and Toddlers' series was supported by the Spark Innovation Programme. Updated January 2025.

