

Activities at Home

To help your baby learn and get stronger

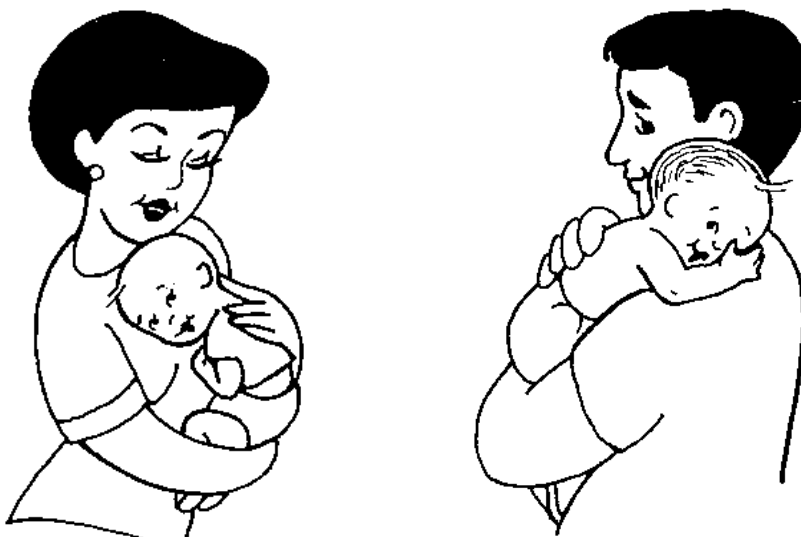
Doing certain activities with your baby will help your baby use their muscles and make them stronger. You can do these activities anywhere and at any time of the day.

Remember to always read your baby's cues. If they are showing signs of stress, slow down or stop what you are doing.

Stomach Muscles

To help your baby learn to use their stomach muscles, keep their arms and legs tucked in close to their body. This is called *flexion* or *midline orientation*.

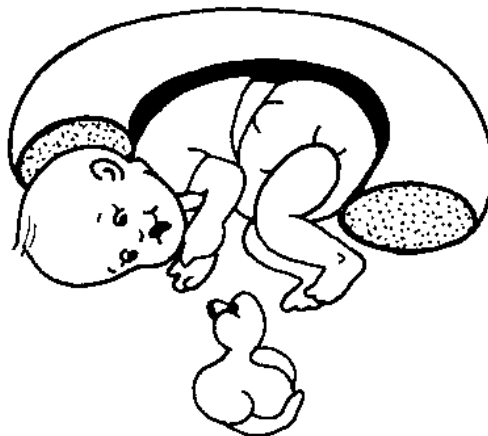
These drawings show different ways to encourage flexion and midline orientation:



When you hold your baby at your chest, make sure her arms are tucked close to her body and her hips and knees are bent softly towards her chest.



When you hold your baby in your arms or on your lap facing you, remember to make sure that his arms are tucked close to his body and able to come together at midline. Also make sure your baby's hips and knees are bent softly.



*This baby is lying on his side with a pillow support behind him. This position helps him to bring his hands together in front of his body for play. Your baby should play in this position **only** if he is awake and you are watching him*

Hand Use

It is important for your baby to use their hands in the middle of their body. In the beginning, you may need to guide your baby by putting their hands together, and by letting them grasp your fingers or hold onto small, light toys.

Remember to let your baby touch and play with objects that have different textures and weights, such as:

- Soft things like stuffed animals
- Hard toys like rattles and teething rings
- Uneven or rough surfaces like washcloths or toys with textures

Remember to watch for your baby's cues. Make sure that your baby stays calm while playing.

Head Turning

Your baby may tend to turn their head to only 1 side. It is important for them to learn to look both right and left. When they are stronger, they also need to learn to keep their head in the center.

Being able to turn their head both ways will help your baby's neck get stronger. It will also help keep their head a nice round shape.

- During daily activities, make sure your baby spends time looking right, looking left, and keeping their head centered.
- From time to time, change the position of your baby's crib so that they can see the action in the room from different directions.
- Change the side of the changing table you hang toys on. This will help your baby learn to look both ways.
- Alternate the shoulder you hold your baby on. This will help them turn their head in different directions.

Tummy Time

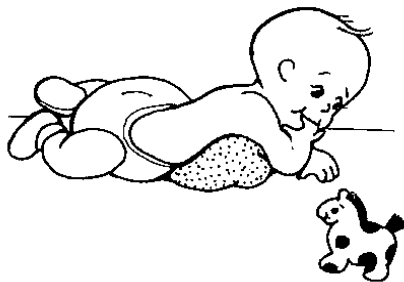
Your baby should spend time on their tummy every day when they aren't sleeping. This position helps their muscle development.

Start tummy time as soon as you get home from the hospital. If your baby does not spend time on their tummy early, they may not like it later on.

Always closely watch your baby during tummy time to make sure:

- Your baby stays awake
- Your baby is not becoming stressed or disorganized

These drawings show 2 ways to encourage your baby to spend time on their tummy:



This baby is on her tummy with a small rolled blanket placed under her arms. This way, she doesn't have to work as hard to hold her head up.



This baby is playing on his tummy on his caregiver's chest. He can practice tummy time while still feeling like he is being held.

What You Can Do

- Keep bringing your baby's hands up to their mouth and in front of their body to touch your fingers or other objects.
- Keep helping your baby suck on a pacifier, your finger, and toys. As your baby grows, vary the textures of the toys.
- Choose toys that are narrow, that your baby can grasp easily. Help your baby learn to hold a toy with both hands, and help bring the toy to your baby's mouth.
- Choose toys that respond to your baby's actions, such as rattles, bells, or toys that make noise or light up.
- Provide lots of gentle movement. While holding your baby, softly rock your baby front and back, up and down, or side to side.
- Keep helping your baby learn how to move their body moving their arms and legs in all directions.
- Keep helping your baby curl forward. Bring their knees up to their chest, round their shoulders, and bring their hands together.
- Give your baby lots of tummy time while they are awake. Help your baby learn to push with their arms to raise their body.

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Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit:
206.598.4606