Why do tummy time?

Your insta feed is probably flooded with ideas on how to encourage tummy time with your baby.

We see one pediatrician has garnered nearly a million views. So why bother with tummy time in the first place?

In the late 1990s, pediatricians noted that while the safe sleep recommendation of “back to sleep” prevented sudden infant death syndrome, back sleeping caused the back of heads to flatten. Tummy time gives babies time off of the back of

their heads.

Rest assured, it is not important for your baby to have a perfect basketball-shaped head. Instead, you are helping to prevent obvious flattening. Once your baby learns to sit, around 6 to 7 months, they will spend much less time lying down and have more time for their heads to round out as they continue to grow.

Flattening from pressure on the skull is called “positional plagiocephaly,” which is different from the more serious condition of craniosynostosis. Routine pediatrician visits help your baby’s doctor to determine if your baby’s head is growing correctly.

There are other pluses to tummy time. Tummy time develops neck strength and eventually arm strength, which will help your baby as they try to roll over and, later, to crawl.

Three tips for tummy time:

1. Just like when you get out of a car after a long drive, everything is a little squished and stiff for a newborn. Even from birth, your baby may have a preference to turn their head to the same side. You can start tummy time **while awake** as soon as you get home from the hospital.

2. **When awake**, tummy time is another alternative to a bouncy seat, a wearable harness, etc. Tummy time lets your baby exercise and interact with their tummy-time vantage point of looking up and around them.

3. Babies with older siblings are the most likely to spend

time on their backs as their siblings dance around them and their parents have less time to reposition their youngest. We chuckle when the parents of baby number 3 ask us about the shape of their baby’s head and then reply: “Oh yes…tummy time… we forgot about that.”

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