



# Floor Time



## MUSCLES & MOTOR SKILLS

**Your baby needs floor time on his/her back and tummy to allow for development of muscles and motor skills.**

Floor time helps avoid plagiocephaly, an abnormal flattening of the back of the head, and torticollis, a tightness of the muscles on the side of the neck. Often plagiocephaly and torticollis are preventable, if parents use floor time immediately after their child is born.

**Tummy time is safe from day one. Your baby needs tummy time right away to begin development.**

Since the early 1990's the Back to Sleep program has successfully decreased the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS); however, babies still need to spend time on their tummy during waking hours to help develop neck, arm and trunk muscles. It is also common practice now to place babies in car seat carriers, swings, and other types of devices which restrict their movements. Too much time in these devices can result in asymmetrical positioning of the neck, leading to torticollis, and asymmetrical positioning of the head, leading to plagiocephaly. These also restrict your baby's ability to move freely and use his/her muscles naturally.

## WHAT IS FLOOR TIME AND TUMMY TIME?

Floor time is any time your baby is lying on the floor on his/her back, side or stomach allowing him/her to move freely.

Tummy time is specifically when your baby is positioned on his/her tummy on the floor.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- It allows your baby to move freely and naturally to develop strength and coordination
- It allows your baby to change positions freely to reduce the risk of developing torticollis and plagiocephaly
- Tummy time helps your child develop neck and back muscles to improve head and trunk control and progress through normal developmental milestones

**To learn more, call Rehabilitation Services at 507-646-8800 or visit [northfieldhospital.org](http://northfieldhospital.org).**

# HOW CAN I INCORPORATE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES INTO OUR DAY?



## PLAY TIME

- When your baby is awake, lay him/her on the floor during play time
- Practice movements with your baby. Guide his/her legs and arms through their full range of motion. Roll your baby from back to tummy and then from tummy to back.
- It is okay for your baby to fuss a little while on the floor and on his/her tummy
- Lie back and position your baby on his/her tummy on your chest then you can easily interact with your baby
- Support your baby in a sitting position so he/she can practice sitting balance
- Talk to your baby and make eye contact with her/him as often as possible



## CARRY POSITIONS

- Use seats, swings and other devices sparingly. Holding your baby or watching him/her play on the floor is better for development than being in a device for long periods of time.
- Alternate which arm you carry your baby on to develop his/her strength and range of motion symmetrically
- Carry your baby belly down supporting him/her on your arm. Younger infants will need their heads and chests supported but as your baby gains strength in the neck and trunk, less support is needed.
- As your baby gets older, alternate which hip you carry him/her on. This encourages looking, balancing and turning both directions
- Hold your baby facing away from you so he/she can look around



## DRESSING AND DIAPERING

- After each diaper change, do a combination of floor time and tummy time for 2 minutes
- Alternate which way you lay your baby on the changing table so they look and roll both directions
- Gently roll your baby from side to side as you fasten the diaper tabs
- When your baby can sit safely, let him/her sit up to put on shirts and encourage him/her to push his/her arms into the shirt

**And most importantly,  
have fun with your child!**

**If you have any concerns  
about your child's  
developmental progress,  
please call 507-646-8800 and  
ask to speak with a pediatric  
therapist.**

## Rehabilitation Services - Pediatrics (Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapies)

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