

## The First 3 Months Play Positions and Development

### Wake Windows and Play Positions

Know that babies sleep a lot at this stage so it is best to try to provide your child with a variety of different play positions in the time they are awake! Remember that too much of one position can over strengthen and cause difficulty in the other positions.

The four recommended play positions for this age group are:

1. Tummy Time
2. Side lying
3. Back Play
4. Elevated Vertical Play

### *Tummy Time*

There are so many different positions you can play on your baby's tummy. Try 5-10 minutes with each diaper change or ensure you are doing it for at least one wake window. In the first 2 months it is often best that the baby is placed on a raised surface where their hips are below their shoulders. Try to tuck their arms under them and get down to their level to engage with them.

Some options for tummy time include:

- in a carrier
- on your chest
- on an exercise ball
- roll or cushion under their armpit/chest
- over your knee sideways
- have an older child hold, facing outwards
- on your lap facing out

***Side Lying*** Side lying play helps to encourage the rounding of the rib cage and midline play. If needed support from behind with a pillow or other object to prevent arching. Ensure you are placing them on both sides for symmetry. If you have any head shape concerns, place them on the opposite side to the flattening for a greater time on their side. Also helps to cue the transition for rolling.

- newborns can try along your arm and in front of a mirror
- flat on top of your leg or along a roll to elevate the head
- flat on their side, bring the top leg over and hands out in front

### ***Back Play***

Helps to stimulate tracking and development of midline play. They can start to develop movement of their hands to mouth and work on strengthening the core. Practice playing with toys in the midline and having them reach in this position. Facilitate feet to mouth and feet to hand play. Try bringing the opposite hand to foot. Closer to the end of 3 months can start to work more on core strength and either elevating their shoulders or bum up so bringing their feet to their mouth is easier and encourages core strengthening.

### ***Elevated Vertical Play***

Around 8 weeks can start to play in a supported upright seated position. This could be sitting on the edge of a couch or other raised surface. Over the end of your knee. In this position you are looking to activate their vestibular system and continue to develop their neck and core muscles.

### ***Carrying Positions***

Try to work on a variety of carrying positions to help develop neck strength and symmetry. Positions you can try are:

- Carrying facing in (above or below your shoulders)
- Supported carrying, facing out
- Football carry (through their legs and onto the opposite shoulder facing out)
- Along your arm

### ***Torticollis & Plagiocephaly***

Torticollis is a condition characterized by tightening of the neck muscles that are involved in tilting or rotating a baby's head. A child will present with a favoritism to one side, most typically you see them with a tilt to one side and looking up to the opposite direction. It is possible that the tilt and rotation are in the same direction. This restriction in this muscle can impact development and is something to monitor for in your baby.



Plagiocephaly is a condition resulting in flatness on a baby's head that may develop if your baby is lying on his/her back and prefers to look in one direction. Ensure you are monitoring your babies head shape and changing their positions regularly.



#### **Helpful Strategies:**

Limit use of car seats, bouncy seats and swings, as this puts pressure on the flattened area. We recommend baby carriers and playing on the floor on the baby's side or tummy whenever possible.