



TUMMY TIME FOR INFANTS

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ROUTINE:

Tummy time is a wonderful opportunity for young infants to develop upper body muscles and learn about and **explore** the world around them. You can introduce STEM ideas and vocabulary as you support their physical development.

During tummy time, your baby is using their **senses to explore** the world by **touching, looking, and listening** to everything around them. Try placing interesting objects nearby, like a **soft** toy, a **crinkly** blanket, or a **colorful** book, and describe what your baby **sees and feels**. "This ball is **round** and **soft**. Can you feel how **fuzzy** it is?" This helps your baby notice the **properties** of things in their environment.

Your baby is also starting to discover that their own **actions can make things happen**. When they swat at a toy and it moves, or kick their legs and feel the blanket shift, they are beginning to **investigate cause and effect**. Try placing a toy just within reach and watch what your baby does. Say, "You touched the toy and it moved!" to help connect their actions to what they observe.

With a little practice, tummy time can become a natural place to build the foundation for STEM learning.

STEM LEARNING AREAS:

Physical Science: Concepts related to objects or things, what they do, and how they move

- **Structure & Properties of Materials:** Understanding characteristics of things and how those characteristics impact what things do

Engineering: Figuring out how things work and using materials to design, build, test, and improve solutions to problems

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TUMMY PLAY TIME (AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS)

Infants at any age should not be left alone facing down. An adult should always guide tummy time. Additionally, while tummy time is a wonderful opportunity for babies' development and exploration, babies should still sleep on their backs and not their stomach.

- **First day home:** 3-5 minutes 2-3 times daily (15 minutes total)
- **By three/four months:** Increase length and frequency of tummy time (at least an hour total per day)
- **Until they are crawling:** Increase length and frequency of tummy time (at least an hour and a half total per day)



TUMMY TIME FOR INFANTS

ADAPTATIONS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested daily routine. These are only suggested activity adaptations. Adaptations are simple changes you can make to your child's space, toys, or activities to help them stay engaged and learn STEM ideas and words during daily routines. Consider consulting your child's care team first.



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.

ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENT

- You can use roll-up towel or blanket, pillow, or wedge to give them extra support during tummy time.
- Dim the light, if using light-up toys during tummy time.
- If your child really dislikes tummy time, start by trying short periods (1-2 minutes) several times throughout the day and then gradually extending the tummy time.
- Or if you are able, lay them on your stomach instead of the floor or walk around with them cradle in your arm on their tummy to help them lift their head and push up.
- Learn how to do tummy time in various positions:
 - **Having Tummy Time Trouble? This Therapist Has Some Tips**
 - **Five Essential Tummy Time Moves, How to do Tummy Time**



Image Credit:
CreativeMadnessMama.com



Image Credit: Jon Pinder, Flickr



TUMMY TIME FOR INFANTS

ADAPTATIONS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

MATERIALS

- Use objects that make sounds, with different textures, or with lights, such as rattles, scarves, or crinkly paper.



INTERACTIONS OR INSTRUCTION

- Smile and communicate with your child at eye level.
- Speak or sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response.
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, or body language.
- Use your child's preferred toys to distract them in order to increase time on their tummy.
- Encourage older siblings to join tummy time.

Quick Tip:

Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues, such as touch, object, movement, or visual.



Image Credit: Kyle Van Horn, Flickr



TUMMY TIME FOR INFANTS

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

1 – TEXTURE OBSERVER

Description: Help your child **explore textures of materials**. Provide household items with different **textures** on the floor for your infants to explore, such as sponges, small paper bags, or towels. Allow your infants to explore those items in their own way and using **different senses**. Narrate the actions and experiences as they **explore** the items.

What My Child Is Learning!

Tummy time could help your infants develop upper body muscles, but it could be unbearable for them. Using objects or interacting with them could motivate them to hold their heads up longer.

Children at this age learn through **exploring** the objects/environments and interacting with adults. Narrating children's experiences helps them make a connection between words, concepts, and real-life experiences. For example, using words to describe textures, like **soft, hard, squishy, smooth, rough**, could help your children develop fundamental science concept: **physical properties**. You may say, "What are you grabbing? You like something **soft and squishy**, don't you?"

2 – BALL OBSERVER & MOVER

Description: Help your child **explore textures** of balls and how they **move**. Provide **small** balls with varied **sizes, colors, or textures** and allow children to play with balls in their own way. While interacting with a ball, talk about the **textures, sizes, colors, or movements** of the ball.

What My Child Is Learning!

Tummy time could help your infants develop upper body muscles, but it could be unbearable for them. Using objects or interacting with them could motivate them to hold their heads up longer.

There are multiple STEM learning opportunities for your infants as they play with the balls. You can talk about the **properties** of balls. For example, you may say, "Looks like you like the **yellow** one. The **red** one is too **big** for you, huh?"

You can also talk about how balls can **move** in different ways. For example, you may say, "You **dropped** the ball! The ball is **rolling**."



TUMMY TIME FOR INFANTS

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

3 – BODY INVESTIGATOR



Description: Help your child **explore** their **body** and their environment. Place your infants on tummy in front of a **mirror**. Encourage your infants to look at their own **reflections** in the mirror during tummy time. Point to different **body parts** and say, "What is this? It is your **nose!**"

What My Child Is Learning!

Tummy time could help your infants develop upper body muscles, but it could be unbearable for them. Using objects or interacting with them could motivate them to hold their heads up longer.

Talk about what your child is **seeing** and **doing** as they **explore** themselves in the mirror. "Look at you! That is your **face** looking back at you! Can you **see your eyes?** **Your nose?**" Narrating out loud helps your infant begin connecting words to real-life experiences and builds early awareness of their own **body**.

As your infant explores and interacts with their **reflection**, try these:

- Encourage **exploration** first: Before drawing your baby's attention to specific **body parts**, let them look and react on their own. "What do you **see?** Is that you? Look at that baby!"
- Name and point to **body parts**: "Look, there are your **hands!** Can you see them **moving?** Those are your **fingers** — **one, two, three!**"
- Play an imitation game: Make a simple **movement** in front of the mirror and invite your baby to copy you. Blink your **eyes** and say, "You are blinking your eyes, just like me! Let's do it **again!**" Try **opening** your **mouth**, **wiggling** your **fingers**, or **turning** your **head**. Always give your baby time to respond.
- Use **spatial** language: Describe your baby's **movements** and **position** with simple directional words. "You are **lifting** your **head up so high!**"
- Celebrate **repeated** attempts: Your baby may need many tummy time sessions before they begin to recognize their own **reflection**, and that is completely normal! Every look is a learning experience. "You saw yourself! You are looking so hard. Let's try again!"



TUMMY TIME FOR INFANTS

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

4 – PEEK-A-BOO INVESTIGATOR

Description: Help your infant **explore** the world through their **senses**! Play peekaboo with your **face**, toys, and everyday objects to spark curiosity and discovery. Talk about what your baby **sees, hears, and touches** as you play together. Offer a variety of safe choices with different **textures, colors, and sounds**.

What My Child Is Learning!

Tummy time could help your infants develop upper body muscles, but it could be unbearable for them. Using objects or interacting with them could motivate them to hold their heads up longer.

As your infant **looks, reaches, and investigates** during peekaboo, try these:

- Start simple: **Cover** your face with your hands and slowly reveal yourself. "Peekaboo! **Here** I am!" Give your baby time to react before hiding again. It helps children develop object permanence, which is also an early understanding of science.
- **Cover and uncover** objects: Place a favorite toy under a small cloth during tummy time. Ask, "**Where** did it go? Is it hiding?" Then slowly lift the cloth and say, "**There** it is!" Give your baby time to **look, reach, and explore** before trying again.
- **Count** together: Build anticipation by **counting** aloud before the big reveal. "**One... two... three...** peekaboo!" Hearing numbers in a fun, repeated context builds early number awareness naturally.
- Follow their lead: Once your baby knows the game, they may start pulling the cloth off themselves or looking back at you to go again. Celebrate this! "You found it all by yourself!" Their curiosity and initiation is the beginning of scientific inquiry.
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat:** Your baby may want to play the same game over and over. And that is exactly the point! Repeating an action on purpose is an early computational thinking skill.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Check out these books about tummy time:
 - *See Touch Feel: Tummy Time* by Roger Priddy
 - *Tummy Time Friends: A fold-out book* by Carol McDougall & Shanda LaRamee-Jones
 - *The Nose, Toes, and Tummy Book* by Sally Nicholls & Gosia Herba
- Check out these books about **body parts**:
 - *Your Whole Body* by Lizzie DeYoung Charbonneau & Misha Iver
 - *Hello, World! My Body* by Jill McDonald
 - *My Little World: My Body* by Roger Priddy

