

# How do I protect my baby's head shape?

## PHYSIOTHERAPY - Child Youth and Family

### Why do babies get flat heads?

Babies can get flat heads, 'plagiocephaly', for a variety of reasons and most commonly this is because a baby's head is soft and changes shape easily. Due to Safe Sleeping Recommendations, babies spend a lot of time on their back and this can cause flattening to the back of the head. If a baby favours turning their head one way more than the other the head can become flat on one side.

### What can I do?

#### Sleep Time

- Always sleep your baby on their back, not on their tummy or side
- A firm cot mattress with no bolsters, pillows or toys when sleeping is best
- When they are sleeping alternate your baby's head to the right or to the left
- For more information on safe sleeping see - [www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/maternity/Publications/safe-sleep-flyer.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/maternity/Publications/safe-sleep-flyer.pdf)

#### Awake time

- Vary your baby's head position when awake
- Practice eye contact with your baby and encourage them to look to the left and right



Commence tummy time from birth when your baby is awake and an adult is watching.



Include alternate left and right side lying as part of your baby's play routine.



Vary cuddling and carrying positions.



When picking up your baby, roll them onto their side first to encourage the muscles on the side of their neck to get stronger. Go towards the left or the right.

## Tips for tummy time

- Start Early: Tummy time can be commenced from birth
- Supervise: An adult should be present to supervise tummy time
- Frequency: Placing your baby on their tummy frequently throughout the day is best
- Arms: Assist your baby to place their elbows under their shoulders. Place a hand on their bottom to help them stabilise if required
- Alternate: Try alternative tummy time positions like on your chest or your lap
- Roll: Use a small rolled up towel under the chest when first starting tummy time



Start small with just a few minutes of tummy time every day and don't stop at the first protest – reassure your baby and change the position slightly. Eventually try to work up to an hour a day in small increments. This does not have to be all at once.

If you start early your baby will get stronger gradually and enjoy tummy time more and more.

If you're late to start don't worry, begin slowly and build up.

Babies generally enjoy tummy time more when they are close to you and have interesting things to look at.

### PHYSIOTHERAPY - Child Youth and Family Primary and Community Health

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