

the early years toolkit

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other quality understanding dedication hope enthusiastic specialist compassion
personal community people together help care understanding specialist dedication safe local support trust depe
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Helping a baby develop rolling and sitting

Why do babies learn to roll?

Babies learn to roll to grasp for toys that are outside of their reach and to explore their environment.

Why is rolling important in a baby's development?

Rolling helps develop the muscles in your baby's tummy and back which helps them to gain the strength they need to be able to sit and move between positions. It allows them to explore and gain new experiences which helps with other areas of development.

How can I encourage my baby to roll?

It is important for your baby to spend lots of time every day on the floor playing in different positions. Placing toys just out of your child's reach around them on the floor will encourage them to try to roll. Ensure your child isn't always placed under a baby gym when they are on the floor where toys are in easy reach above them. Avoid placing your baby in any type of seat including bouncy chairs, push chairs, car seats, door bouncers and baby walkers for long periods. These may prevent a baby from learning how to roll if used for long periods.

How often should I practise rolling with my baby?

You should encourage your baby to roll throughout the day. If you are moving them from their front to their back or their back to their front, help them to roll rather than picking them up and placing them.

Rolling from tummy to back

Babies commonly first learn to roll from their tummy to their back by pushing up unevenly on their hands and rolling to one side. It is therefore really important to place your baby on their tummy to play frequently throughout the day so they have the chance to practise this skill.

Rolling from back to tummy

- With your baby lying on their back, gain their interest in a toy and then place it to the side of their head.

- Hold the leg on the opposite side of the toy at the knee and slowly bring it across their body so that they roll onto their side and then onto their tummy towards the toy.
- Do this slowly so that your baby can join in with the movement and do some of it for themselves.
- They might need some help to bring their arms out in front of them if they get trapped under them as they roll.

How can I help my baby learn to sit?

- Sit with your baby on the floor, supporting them around their body.
- Put toys in front of them for them to play with. Babies need to prop on their hands as they learn to sit. You can help them learn this by placing sturdy toys in front of them for them to lean on.
- Give them as little support as they need so that they are using their tummy and back muscles.
- As they improve, you can move your hands from their body to their shoulders or their hips.

You might like to sit your baby in a play ring to give them some support. Place toys in or on the ring so that they can play.

How can I help my baby learn to get from lying to sitting?

- Start with your child lying on their back. Grasp one hand and bring their arm up towards you across their body.
- They should start to push off the floor with their other hand and help get themselves into sitting.
- You can do this throughout the day whenever you want to help your baby move from lying to sitting so they get regular practice and they start to understand how to move position by themselves.
- Avoid holding both their hands to pull them up as this means that they can't push up for themselves.