

*I know that play is important for babies. But she's so small!
What can I do that she'll like and is safe?*

Games and activities

Play is how your baby learns. It helps her to develop the skills she needs to grow and learn.

When you spend time playing with your baby, you're showing her that you love her and that she's important to you. And it's fun for both of you!

Tummy time—To build strong muscles

Tummy play gives your baby a break from lying on his back. It helps him learn to lift his head and to push up on his hands and arms.

- Lay on your back.
- Lay your baby on his tummy on top of your chest.
- Play with him. Talk to him so he'll lift his head to look at you.

OR

- Lay baby tummy down on a blanket on the floor.
- Lay on your tummy, facing him.
- Talk to him. Play with him.
- Show him toys so he'll lift his head to look. Put an unbreakable mirror nearby, so he can see himself when he looks down.
- Play music so he'll look to see where it's coming from.



Tummy time will also help prevent flathead. For information on flathead, see [page 87](#).

Baby massage— To teach baby about her body

While doing this, sing to your baby. Talk to her. Say the names of her body parts.

- Lay your baby on her back.
- Sit or kneel next to her.
- Gently stroke each of her arms, from top to bottom, all the way to her fingertips. Do this several times.
- Stroke each of her legs from top to bottom, all the way to her toes. Do this several times.
- Stroke the sides of her head from top to bottom. Go from the top of the forehead, around the cheeks, and under the chin.
- Rub her hands and feet between your hands.



Tracking—To help baby learn to follow things with his eyes

- Lay your baby on his back.
- Say his name until he looks at you.
- Hold something black and white about 20 cm (8 inches) from his face.
- Slowly move it from side to side. Go slowly so baby's eyes have time to follow.
- Give baby a rest. Smile, talk to him.
- Repeat the game a few more times.



Play

Copycat—To help baby learn by copying what you do

- Lay your baby on her back.
- Say her name until she looks at you.
- Bring your face close to hers—about 25 cm (10 inches) away.
- Slowly stick out your tongue. Wait a few seconds. Do it again.
- Give baby time to copy you.



Pull-ups—To help your baby use his muscles

Do this activity with your baby when he's old enough to hold up his head.

- Lay your baby on his back.
- Hold both his hands.
- Slowly pull up until baby is sitting.
- Talk to him while pulling. Say things like, "Up we go!" Do this several times.
- After a while, you'll find that your baby tries to do more of the work and you have to pull less.

Toys

Babies don't need a lot of expensive toys. They need:

- **Things to look at**—
colourful pictures, mobiles, books
- **Things to hold and chew on**—
teething toys, clean wet facecloth
- **Things that make noise**—
rattles, musical toys
- **Soft toys**—
to feel different textures

For a baby, a parent is the best toy in the world!

Your face and smile to look at...

Your voice to hear...

Your fingers to grab and hold...

Your warm body and arms to keep her safe while she learns about the world...

You are your baby's best toy!



Your baby wants you to know...

The best times to play with me or read to me are when I'm quiet, calm, and awake.

When I'm tired of playing, I'll look away or turn my head.

If I'm very tired, I'll cry.

Loving Care



Birth to 6 Months

2010


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