



## A Physical Therapist's View on:

### Tummy Time!

- ❖ IMPORTANT! When awake and supervised, babies should play on their tummies!
- ❖ Strengthens muscles for good posture, movement, and motor skills
- ❖ Facilitates good visual and motor development
- ❖ Sensory motor development in arms and hands
- ❖ Tummy time should be FUN!
- ❖ May need to start for short periods (minute or two) and increase as baby gets used to being on his tummy
- ❖ By providing opportunities for playing on his tummy, will prevent: motor delays, mis-shaped heads, postural weakness

### “W” sitting!

- ❖ BE AWARE! Do not allow your child to *consistently* sit in “W” sit position
- ❖ Children who have less than expected trunk stability (core strength or postural low tone) tend to sit in “W” position
- ❖ Do not have to use trunk muscles to maintain position
- ❖ Lack good weight shifting and trunk rotation, which are needed for good motor skills
- ❖ Puts undue stress on hips and knee ligaments and boney structure
- ❖ To move from “W” sit position: put feet under legs, weight shift onto one hip, and bring legs out in front.

### Exersaucers and jolly jumpers

- ❖ BE AWARE! Best to use a playpen if need to keep baby safe while adult attends to other things.
- ❖ These do not help to strengthen leg muscles for walking
- ❖ They do delay the strengthening of abdominal and postural muscles needed for walking
- ❖ Can cause poor posture and poor movement patterns, which may need to be corrected through therapy
- ❖ Can cause children to walk on tiptoes and cause contractures of lower leg muscles
- ❖ Hips are widely positioned, which only causes difficulty for babies with low muscle tone to gain pelvic and leg strength
- ❖ Limits cognitive development as they keep baby from exploring his environment

## Playpens!

- ❖ BE AWARE! Do not leave babies in playpens for long periods of time especially if unattended!
- ❖ Can be used for safety purposes to allow caregivers time to prepare a meal, use the restroom, etc.
- ❖ Better than exersaucer as it allows baby movement in a limited, safe environment

## Crawling!

- ❖ IMPORTANT! Crawling on hands and knees is a good thing!
- ❖ Strengthens and stabilizes muscles in shoulders and muscles in arms and hands that will be needed for good handwriting
- ❖ Integrates the two sides of the brain needed for academics such as reading and writing
- ❖ Strengthens and stabilizes muscles in the pelvis for walking and running

## Falling!

- ❖ IMPORTANT! New walkers fall an average of 17 times per hour!
- ❖ Allow baby some independence when learning to walk to fall and get up
- ❖ Use good judgment; don't want baby to get hurt
- ❖ They learn internal sense of "I can do it" instead of "I better not do it by myself, because my adult is scared I will hurt myself" ...learned helplessness
- ❖ Improves balance and protective reactions necessary for a lifetime
- ❖ Babies will walk and fall...better to do it when they are closer to the ground than when they are older and heavier

## References

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