

# Baby development & play

Simple ways to support your baby's development through everyday play



**Care** for every stage



## What is play?

Play is how your baby learns, explores, interacts and develops.

Play doesn't need to be complicated or expensive, every opportunity for a child to move is considered play.

## Why is movement through play important?

Play helps your baby develop:

-  Strength and coordination
-  Balance and postural control
-  Body awareness
-  Movement skills and confidence
-  Problem-solving and curiosity
-  Social and communication skills

## How can I encourage play?

Babies learn through frequent, short opportunities throughout the day.

### Try to:

- Get down on the floor and play face-to-face with your baby.
- Give your baby regular opportunities to move and explore on a firm, safe floor surface.
- Follow your baby's interests and engagement. Use your voice, face and simple toys to encourage interaction and movement.
- Give your baby time to try, explore and work things out for themselves.

## Tummy Time

Play is important in a variety of positions including on your baby's tummy. Tummy time helps develop the strength and control needed for later movement skills.

Tummy time can happen:

- **On the floor**
- **On your chest while you are awake and alert**
- **Across your lap**
- **With a rolled towel or small support under the chest if needed**

Aim for lots of short opportunities throughout the day rather than one long session.

## Promoting Development

It can be tempting to constantly reposition your baby or place them into positions they cannot yet get into themselves. Giving babies opportunities to initiate movement helps them develop confidence, problem-solving and body awareness.

### WATCH

What is your baby trying to do?

### WAIT

Give them time to have a go.

### ENCOURAGE

Use your voice, face or a favourite toy to motivate them.

### SUPPORT

If they are still having difficulty, provide gentle help.



## Containers & Floor Play

Car seats, prams, bouncers and other baby equipment are useful for everyday life however it's important to balance time in containers with opportunities for active, unrestricted floor play.

Movement and learning can happen during everyday activities such as nappy changes, bath time, getting dressed and outside at the park.

## TOYS and PLAY

Some of the best toys for your baby aren't toys at all. Your baby loves to interact with you by looking at your face and listening to your voice.

Other simple toys that encourage early development include:

- **Mirrors**
- **Lightweight toys that are easy to grasp and hold**
- **Toys with different textures to encourage sensory exploration**

## WHEN SHOULD I SEEK ADVICE?

If you are unsure about your baby's development, notice that they are having difficulty with movement, or simply want ideas to help your baby play and develop, check in with our paediatric physiotherapist at Western Family Practice.

