



A better start for babies

Sensory

Motor

Attention/Regulation

Relationships

Together

EiSMART – promoting and enhancing your child's development.

HELPING MY BABY LEARN THROUGH PLAY: LYING ON THEIR SIDE

Play ideas in side lying

How it helps my baby



Hands to mouth

Playing in side lying can help your baby to:

- Use their hands and eyes for playing as their head is supported
- Bring both hands together to increase awareness of their hands – babies get to know their hands at about 3 months
- Bring their hands to their mouths for exploration and calming – very important!
- Use their hands to reach, explore and grasp
- Develop strength in their trunk to get ready for rolling

Side lying can also be used for feeding if your baby has reflux – see special note overleaf

Side lying is the perfect position for your baby to bring their hands together or to their mouth or use their hands to explore their bodies/ clothes.

Stay close to your baby

Try and get face to face with your baby

Use your voice

Ways to support side lying: remember to change sides from time to time



Looking, interacting, holding on, exploring knees!

Side lying doesn't have to be on the floor.

- This parent demonstrates a great position while sitting!

Standing and carrying

- Some babies love being carried like this looking outwards – great for learning and exploration.



Playing and reaching

This baby is really enjoying reaching whilst his parent is sitting comfortably with his back supported. Try this by placing one arm under your baby's head and your other arm between your baby's legs with your hand on their tummy.

See how your baby likes it if you provide extra sensory and movement experience by moving your legs up and down rhythmically, singing and talking to your baby as you help them enjoy playing on their side.

- When placing your baby down to play on their side you can put them on their back first
- Make sure that your baby's bottom touches the surface before their head to avoid startles
- Gently roll them to their side
- When picking your baby up you can roll them from their side to their back
- Remember to lift their head first and then their body.
- Try and keep eye contact as you pick your baby up or put them down as they will find this reassuring
- Always tell your baby what is happening

SAFETY NOTE: Your baby must be supervised during these activities at all times. Never leave your baby unattended.

Play is how a child learns. This leaflet was created to provide ideas for activities to promote your baby's ability to play in side lying. Development varies from child to child and these activities are not intended as medical or therapeutic advice. If you have any concerns about your child speak to your GP or health visitor and ask for a referral to your local therapy service.

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Building skills



Ideas to help your baby stay comfortably on their side so they can play for longer

Your therapist will tell you which of these positions will help your baby:

- A rolled or folded towel under your baby's head
- A rolled towel or soft toy placed in front of your baby's chest – this supports their body at the front so they can reach forward more easily
- A rolled towel, pillow or large soft toy behind your baby's back for extra support to stay in side lying

Using a raised position like this wedge sometimes works well for helping your baby feel more comfortable in this position.

Getting ready for rolling



Helping your baby stay active in side lying and starting to move into and out of side lying – your therapist will help demonstrate this as soon as your baby is ready:

- Place your hands on your baby's hips and gently help them move back and forwards
 - If your baby is comfortable lying on their side and enjoying reaching, place toys in different positions to challenge them a little more
 - Position a toy slightly out of reach, as your baby reaches towards it gently move their hips forwards so that they are nearly on their tummy to help them reach further
 - Try lifting a toy up so that your baby has to turn their body and reach up
 - Move toys slowly to give your baby time to follow with their eyes and hands. Always make sure you give them the toy for their effort - always ensure they succeed
- Always give your baby time to join in the movement - wait for your baby to be active

Please seek advice if your baby is extending back or bending forwards too much.

Turn off background noise such as the TV so that your baby can really enjoy this time with you
Choose a time of day when your baby is relaxed

Interesting things for my baby to look at when playing on their side

Interacting, looking, reaching and grasping



Position toys or books in your baby's line of vision not too close and not too far away – about 30cms

- If your baby tends to arch back, gradually move toys a little lower to help them bring their head and eyes down to look.
- Prop up a book and read a story - use books with interesting colours and pictures - see which page your baby likes looking at best.
- Sensory toys WHICH are COLOURFUL or MUSICAL may be helpful for visual interest such as strings of shiny beads, mirrors, mirror bells and musical toys.
- Talk to your baby about their hands and what they are doing eg 'you are reaching for the book'



Feeding – Side positioning for play is different from side position for feeding. Please consult your Speech and Language Therapist for specific advice on the best position to feed your baby.

Look out for your baby's communication cues to let you know they are tired, hungry or just have had enough and not comfortable. Babies communicate with you through their behavioural cues and cues such as changing colour, squirming, getting irritable or crying mean it's time for a break!

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