

## DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS

# SITTING

Within the first 2 months of life, infants will be able to hold their heads up briefly when they are supported in a sitting position. Soon after this, they will be able to prop themselves on their hands in sitting with some assistance from an adult. Between 4 and 6 months, babies begin to hold themselves upright in a sitting position with some support at the hips, gradually becoming more independent and stable.

Eventually, around 6 months, they will be able to turn their heads and upper bodies and reach outside their base of support without falling over. Finally, around 8 to 10 months, babies will learn to transition from sitting to all fours and back to sitting again.

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### Why is sitting important for development?

- In sitting, babies are able to explore toys using both hands, which is significant for fine motor development and for developing bilateral skills.
- Sitting helps babies learn to balance and perform small weight shifts to stay in an upright position.
- Sitting in an upright position allows babies to see their surroundings and their hands easily, which promotes visual tracking and visual motor integration.
- Sitting promotes core muscle strength, which is the foundation for the development of other motor skills. In sitting, babies are experiencing the activation and contraction of many muscles at once, which creates postural control.

### How to encourage sitting:

It's best to allow babies plenty of exposure to tummy time, rolling, and exploration of other positions before assisting and supporting them in a sitting position. Babies need lots of time on the floor to achieve these milestones on their own. When your baby appears ready to sit and can hold herself in this position independently, you can try:

- Carrying your baby as often as possible in an upright position to encourage head control.
- Sit your baby on your knees, supporting her at her hips. Bounce both of your knees at once or try lifting one of your heels at a time so baby bounces gently from side to side.
- With your baby sitting on the floor, offer toys to him so he has to reach for them outside of his base of support.
- Sing songs and fingerplays with your baby while she sits (e.g. The Itsy Bitsy Spider, 5 Little Monkeys).
- Babies love this cause and effect Bean Bag Balance game! With the baby positioned in sitting on the floor, place a bean bag or other soft toy on his head and wait for him to lean his head forward to dump the toy off into his lap. Repeat!
- Limit the amount of time your baby spends in a car seat, carrier, stroller, swing, or other supportive sitting device.