

## Rolling over



### Question

*“How can I help my baby to roll over and when will this happen?”*

### Answer

Rolling is an extremely important milestone in your baby's development and the starting point for all other balance skills, including sitting up and crawling.

Rolling from front to back usually occurs at about 3 months. Rolling from back to front and vice-versa is usually achieved at about 6 months of age and sometimes sooner.

The ability to roll over depends on upper body strength (head, neck, shoulders, arms and chest). Babies who are given plenty of tummy time achieve this skill sooner than babies who lie predominantly on their backs.

Although it is safer for your baby to sleep on his back, it is part of normal development to roll over on to his front. When this happens, your baby will be able to roll back over on to his back when he needs to adjust his position. The most important factor is to ensure that your baby does not overheat at night or get tangled in layers of bedding.

Bigger babies can take longer to roll from front to back and vice-versa. Premature babies may reach the milestone later than babies born at full-term.

Some babies find it easier to roll over when their nappies are removed.

### How to encourage this essential milestone

The following can help your baby to roll over:

- Plenty of tummy time will strengthen your baby's upper body muscles in preparation for rolling over.
- Rolling from back to front can be encouraged through play. If a toy or rattle is wriggled or shaken to one side, your baby may roll over to get it.
- Put your baby's arms and legs into the correct position (one arm and shoulder tucked under the body, the other knee bent) and gently roll him over. He will soon get the idea and attempt to roll over on his own.
- Sing 'Rock-a-bye-Baby' and gently rock your baby before rolling him over.
- Play 'Peek-a-boo' on one side of your baby to encourage him/her to roll towards you.
- Make rolling over an enjoyable activity. If your baby seems uncomfortable, try again when he is rested and ready to play.

Rolling enables babies to get to interesting toys and objects, so parents need to be on the lookout for hazards.

If your baby isn't rolling over by 12 months of age, see your GP.