

National Survey of Pediatric Experts Indicates Increase in Infant Delays; More Tummy Time is Key

Research

A national survey of 400+ pediatric physical and occupational therapists, averaging over 20 years' experience, confirms what early childhood medical professionals have been observing: two-thirds of therapists reported a rise in early motor delays in infants in the past six years, and those who saw an increase said that lack of tummy time while awake is the number-one contributor to the escalation in cases. Tummy time is supervised time while awake that babies spend on their abdomens. An early motor delay occurs when a child isn't able to meet critical physical milestones in the first months and years of life, which can later affect a child's ability to learn basic skills such as grasping, crawling, standing and walking.

The survey was conducted by Pathways Awareness, a national not-for-profit that educates parents and medical professionals about the benefits of early intervention for children who show delays in reaching early developmental milestones. The survey was conducted with assistance from the Neuro-Developmental Treatment Association (NDTA) and the Pediatric Section of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). The goal of this survey was to quantify the observations of these highly qualified pediatric professionals, as well as identify possible contributors to the increase in cases.

Backsleeping, "Container" Lifestyle May Contribute

The vast majority of babies now sleep on their backs to help prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The Back-to-Sleep campaign reduces the risk of SIDS by 40%, but also means that babies miss out on the 12 or so hours of tummy time they used to get each day. Back-sleeping, coupled with more awake time in "containers" like car seats, bouncers and strollers, adds up to so much back time that babies aren't able to develop their trunk muscles, contributing to the increase in early motor delays.

Why Tummy Time

New parents are concerned with the basics: sleeping, eating, changing and nurturing. We know that babies are spending more and more time on their backs and the pressure on the infant's head can create a flattening of the back of the skull called positional plagiocephaly. Tummy time and repositioning an infant are two easy preventative measures that can help reduce the chance a baby will develop plagiocephaly. Untreated, plagiocephaly can lead to permanent deformation of the skull that can impact facial asymmetry which can lead to problems such as speech and vision issues.

4 Months Old



View from Top

View from Behind

4 Months Old



Unable to Lift Head & Bear weight on forearms



Able to Lift Head & Bear weight on forearms

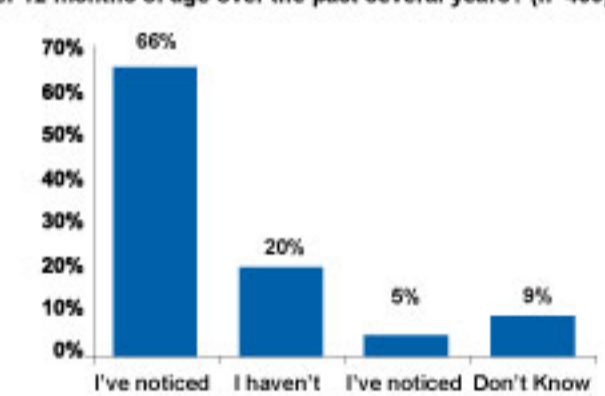
Babies often complain about being placed on their tummy, but if tummy time is begun early (even from just a few days old) and maintained on a consistent schedule, it will become a part of their daily routine. Tummy time can improve head control, neck, trunk and shoulder strength, which are needed for the next stages of development.

Tummy time is critical for building muscle strength so a child can meet their developmental milestones. Suggestions for parents can include singing songs or calling their name while your baby is tummy to tummy with you, getting down to baby's level for eye-to-eye contact and carrying baby tummy down with one hand under the tummy and between the legs – the "football hold". When a parent takes time to play with baby on their tummy, they not only further their physical development, but also build a bond and support socialization skills.

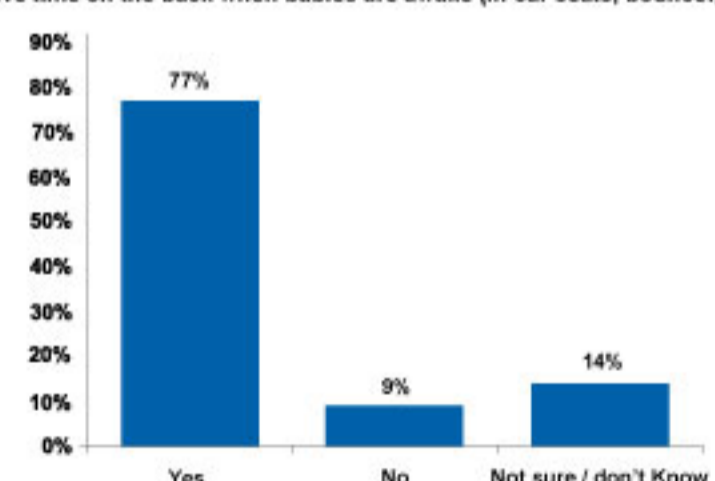
Survey Methodology, Select Questions and Results

The web-based survey was conducted between February and May 2008 by Pathways Awareness. Respondents were 409 highly qualified physical and occupational therapists who belong to the APTA or NDTA, who work with pediatric clients on a regular basis, and who average more than 20 years of experience. All results reported are significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

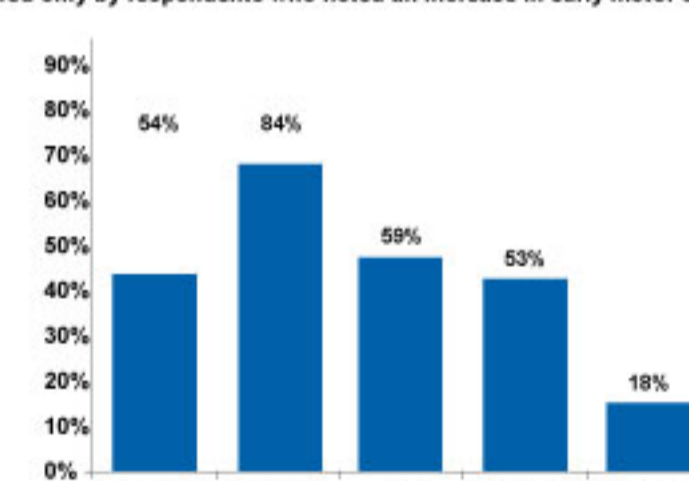
Q: Have you noticed a change in the number of cases of early motor delays babies under 12 months of age over the past several years? (n=409)



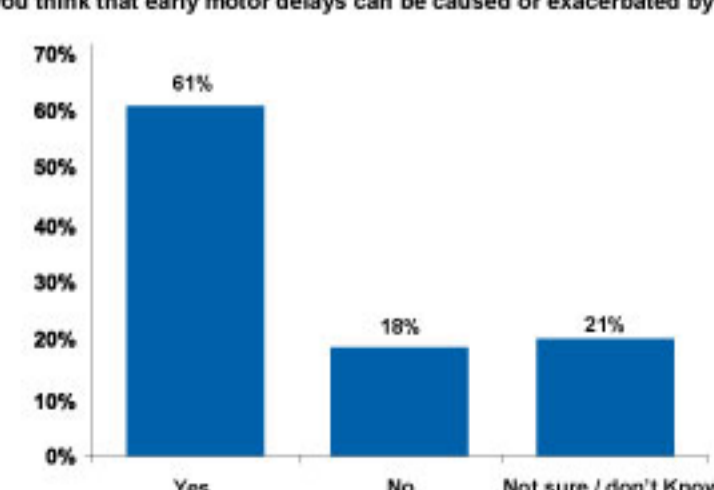
Q: Have you seen early motor delay cases in your practice that can be attributed in part to extensive time on the back when babies are awake (in car seats, bouncer, etc.)? (n=398)



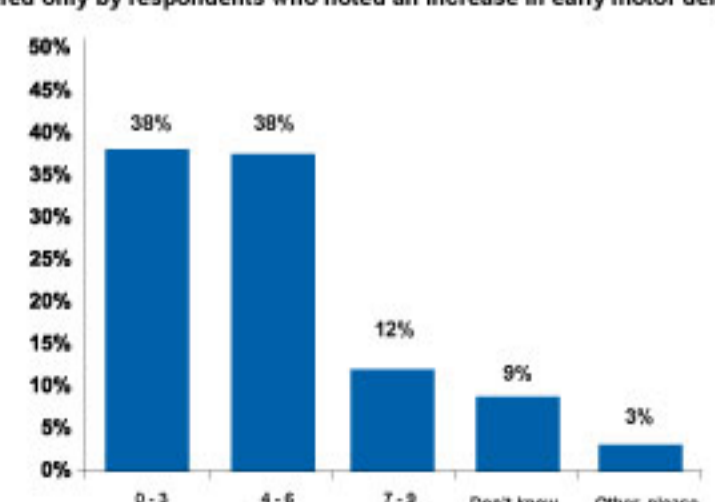
Q: To what do you attribute this increase in early motor delays? (please mark all that apply.) (answered only by respondents who noted an increase in early motor delays, n=270)



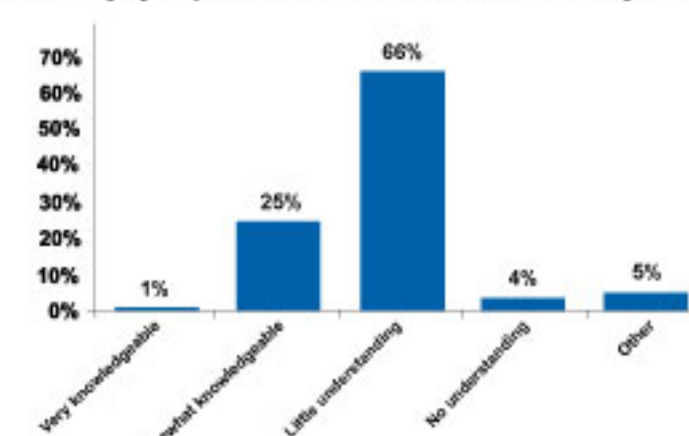
Q: Do you think that early motor delays can be caused or exacerbated by back sleeping? (n=368)



Q: When did you start seeing an increase in early motor delays in children under 12 months? (answered only by respondents who noted an increase in early motor delays, n=270)



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Essential Tummy Time Moves

Top five moves to begin as soon as your baby is born.

Start a few minutes at a time and try to work up to an hour a day in shorter intervals. Every bit of tummy time makes a difference!



Tummy to Tummy
Lie down on the floor or bed, flat or propped up on pillows. Place bab on your chest or tummy, so that you're face-to-face. Always hold firmly for safety.



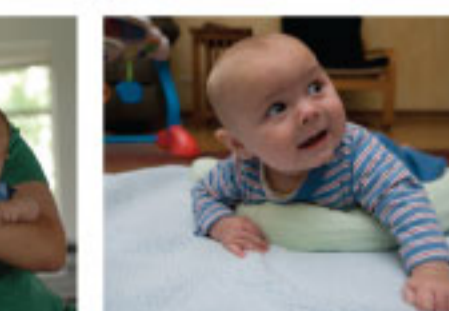
Eye-Level Smile
Get down level with your baby to encourage eye contact. Roll up and place a blanket under the chest and upper arms for added support.



Lap Soothe
Place your baby face-down across your lap to burp or soothe him. A hand on your baby's bottom will help steady and calm.



Tummy-Down Carry
Slide one hand under the tummy and between the legs when carrying baby tummy down. Nestle the baby close to your body.



Tummy Minute
Place your baby on her tummy for one or two minutes every time you change her.