Today’s piece was prepared by Jason Lockrow, MD, based on an article in the New York Times, “ ‘[Tummy Time’ May Not Be Needed](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/06/tummy-time-may-not-be-needed/?ref=health)”

The story highlights a recent study analyzing normative data of infant gross motor development before and after the initiation of “back to sleep”, and found that supine positioning did not lead to a delay in developmental milestones such as rolling over.

The NY Times journalist’s article focuses on the lack of an observable difference between onset of prone-to-supine or supine-to-prone rolling in a cohort from Alberta between 1990-1992, prior to the 2003 American Academy of Pediatrics’ [***back to sleep***](http://www.healthychildcare.org/sids.html) campaign and subsequent 2011 [***safe to sleep***](http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/AAP-Expands-Guidelines-for-Infant-Sleep-Safety-and-SIDS-Risk-Reduction.aspx) modified [Policy Statement](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/10/12/peds.2011-2284.full.pdf%2Bhtml), and a more recent cohort whose collection ended in 2012. In the study, which mined data from the “Alberta Infant Motor Scale” (“AIMS”) performed by physical therapists to establish normative data of developmental milestones, found that the age at which rolling from prone-to-supine and supine-to-prone has not changed in 20 years, nor has there been any difference between the two milestones at either time point, thus there is no detrimental effect of *back to sleep* positioning on rolling patterns. The journalist emphasizes that this stands in contrast to anecdotal evidence of delayed milestones with reduced prone positioning. As to what effect current “tummy time” contributes to this lack of gross motor delay, the authors refer to a study assessing 119 parents which found that only 55% were aware of the importance of tummy time, and hint that tummy time is not utilized in several households.

The NY Times article’s headline extrapolates these findings to state that “ ‘Tummy time’ may not be needed”. The journalist provides a [direct linkage online](http://www.earlyhumandevelopment.com/article/S0378-3782%2812%2900267-8/abstract) to the published research, quoting the lead author’s remark that “the back to sleep campaign has not adversely affected motor development. Motor development happens.” The journalist somewhat misleadingly ties this quotation to the question of “whether tummy time helps or not,” a question which the first author makes strides to avoid answering in the manuscript.

Parents who seek clarification can be alerted that the Times piece is somewhat misleading, and that while the findings are of interest, they’re not conclusive. As of yet, no policy changes have been implemented or suggested.  The following resources may help:

**RESOURCE ON SAFE SLEEPING:**

[Safe to Sleep Public Education Campaign](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS/Pages/sids.aspx) *National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!