

Crawling First

By Daya Bhagwandas

We have all heard the saying, "you have to crawl before you can walk." This has special significance for infant development. So, why is it important that babies learn to tummy crawl and creep?

B A B I E S

Crawling (commando movement)

As babies drag themselves across the floor or carpet they are using movement as a way of life. This 'freedom' gives them the opportunity to:



- Learn about the coordination of body and limbs in preparation for creeping.
- Strengthen and develop overall muscle tone especially in their arms, hands, legs and feet.
- Develop grasp, holding and letting go skills.
- Stimulate hundreds of touch and position messages that flow to the brain.
- Experience different textures and environment, which stimulate and enhance brain development.
- Develop visual skills eg a toy seen in the distance and moving towards it facilitates focusing at varying distances, called accommodation.
- Improve breathing

Creeping (hands and knees)

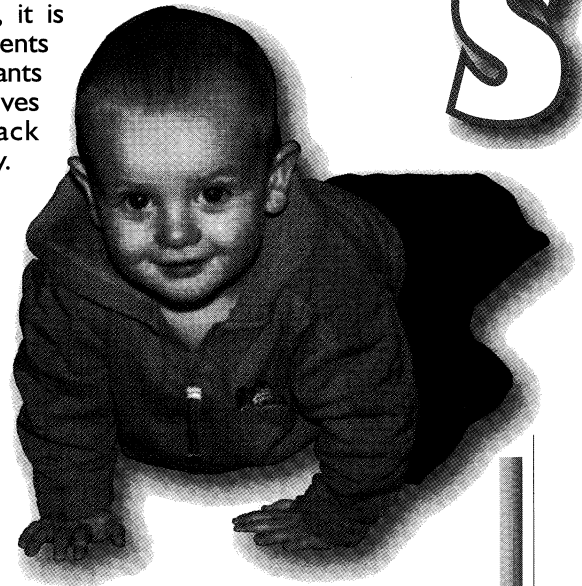
Creeping is the next level up the movement pathway after crawling on tummy. In this position your baby is:

- Improving balance and coordination
- Gaining tremendous muscle development, especially of the hands, so important for the development of later fine motor skills, such as writing.
- Learning to coordinate the two sides of the body with the hand on one side and the knee of the other hitting the floor at exactly the same time, called cross movements.
- Improving body rhythm and timing important for thinking and moving, required later in maths and writing skills.

- Appreciating the three dimensional world from being on hands and knees, through the simultaneous development in vision, hearing and touch.
- Developing depth perception as the distance between the infant's eyes and floor when in this position, is the same distance between the eyes and book at school age.
- Improving accommodation as our infant is also focusing down at his hands and then up at distant objects, making many visual adjustments from near to far and back again, as he will be required to do between blackboard and book at school!
- Improving the ability to localise and discriminate sounds near and far, all around him
- Appreciating and learning about touch from greater freedom to explore
- Developing the bone structures and muscle tone for upright position and walking
- Making greater respiratory improvement for general health, vocalisation (babbling) and talking
- Able to learn to sit himself

Let your infant sit and walk in his own time, it is important for parents to realise that infants will sit themselves when their back muscles are ready.

In normal development this occurs about the time of creeping - the infant pivots sideways and sits. Just provide the appropriate opportunities and allow nature to dictate the terms of development.



There is a reason for each stage. Do not be in a hurry for your child to walk, for it is not how early he walks, but how much he learns about himself and his world before he walks that will influence the development of his intelligence.