



Playpak Factsheet #01:
**The importance of early
development through play**

Every baby comes into the world with limited abilities. The first three years of their lives are the most important period of development. But time doesn't overcome the newborn limitations of some babies. If a child's development is delayed, they are likely to acquire skills more slowly, or the extent to which they master a skill may vary.

A child with developmental delay, just like any other, learns through play. Fun through play can actually encourage children to work harder on therapy goals.

Playpak enables play in three vital therapeutic positions that form the foundations of later abilities - back lying (supine), tummy lying (prone) and floor sitting (long sitting).

Therapists and parents "mix and match" activities for the child using various components and postures. The aim is to create a fun environment that encourages the child to improve movement skills, strength and coordination.

Family participation

Playpak lets the family play a bigger part in a child's therapy.

Research shows early intervention programmes encouraging therapists and families to work together, like Playpak does, make an even bigger impact on a child's development.

Regular practice is necessary to make those important early connections in the brain. For some children, the suggested developmental games and programmes can also help reduce irritability and improve physical, sensory, communication and independence skills.



Therapists and families in partnership

You will most likely find each child prefers some positions to others. Some positions may even need to be avoided for medical reasons, while others simply need to be encouraged if the child is not keen at the start. Therapist(s) should take the lead in this scenario to figure out the best positions and exercises for each child.



Playpak Factsheet #02:

How to unpack and pack Playpak

Unpacking

Playpak arrives ready for use.

Lay it on the floor. Lift up the flap of the bag and unzip the sides by pulling on the orange Firefly zip pulls (watch your fingers in the zips).

Fold flat by gently pulling apart the Velcro on the two short sides.

Remove the shoulder strap using the two hooks on either end before using your Playpak, as it could create an uneven surface underneath.

Now you're ready.

- 1 Rolls (1x long and 1x short)**
These rolls can be used on their own or with other support elements to provide just the right level of support.
- 2 Positioning Strap**
Use this versatile strap in addition to the rolls for extra support when needed at the front, sides or back.
- 3 Head/Tummy Support**
Can be used on its own to support head or trunk, or with other components for extra positioning possibilities.
- 4 Horseshoe Sitting Supports (1x large and 1x small)**
These profiled cushions are designed to give your child lower and upper back support, while allowing the hands to be free for play and function. When used in conjunction with the other elements, additional front, rear or side support can be increased.

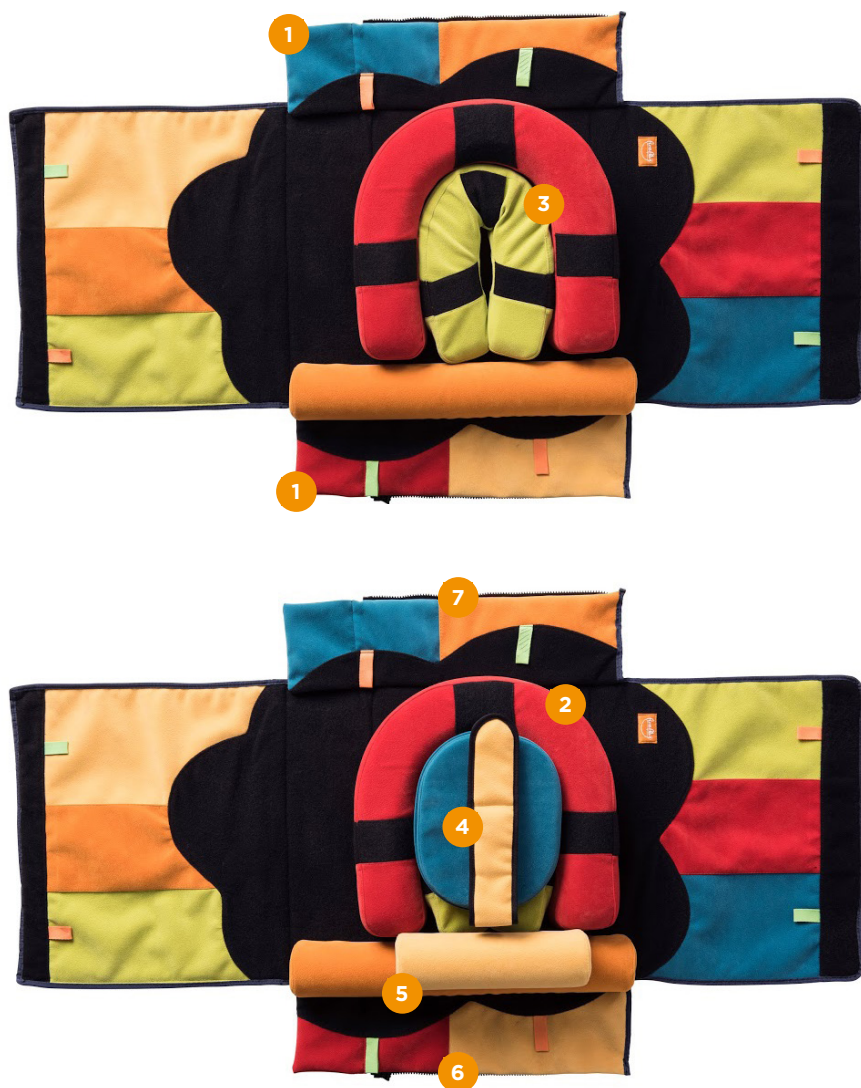


Packing

There are a number of different ways to pack Playpak efficiently, and you will find the best way for you with practice. This is our recommended technique for efficient packing:

- 1 Use the Velcro on the two small side flaps to stand the flaps up. This will give you an accurate idea of how much space you have.
- 2 Place the large red horseshoe sitting support on to the mat first. The back of the support should be sitting flush with the folding edge of the bag.
- 3 Place the small green horseshoe sitting support in the middle of the large red one.
- 4 The blue head/tummy support will sit neatly on top of the green horseshoe support, along with the positioning strap
- 5 Place the long orange roll at the other folding edge of the bag, as shown, and place the short yellow roll on top of it, (you may need to fold the long orange roll in half)
- 6 Zip up this side of the bag using the orange Firefly zip pull, being careful not to nip your fingers.
- 7 Zip up the other side of the bag, then pull the flap over and push down so that the Velcro 'sticks' securely.
- 8 Attach your shoulder strap using the hooks on either end of the straps.

You are ready to go!





Playpak Factsheet #03: Playpak Therapy Guide - Supine (Back Lying)

All of the activities outlined in this Factsheet are also available to follow by using our animated and narrated online guide. Watch it at www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak

Supine (Back Lying) - why?

Back lying is the most fundamental and secure position from which to work on those physical, cognitive, sensory, and communication skills that build the foundations of more complex skills.



Cognitive goals

When children bring their hands and feet together to explore, they learn about their own body parts and their relationship to each other. This forms the basis of body awareness and coordination.

Communication goals

In this position it is easiest for children to become more aware of the people and objects around them. They'll develop skills in paying attention, concentrating and turn-taking – all early stages of communication, language and speech.

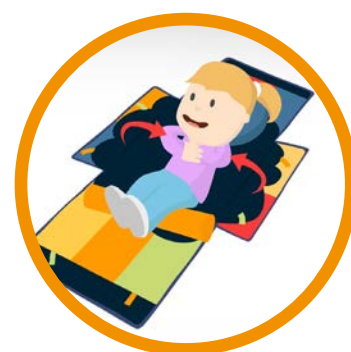


Sensory goals

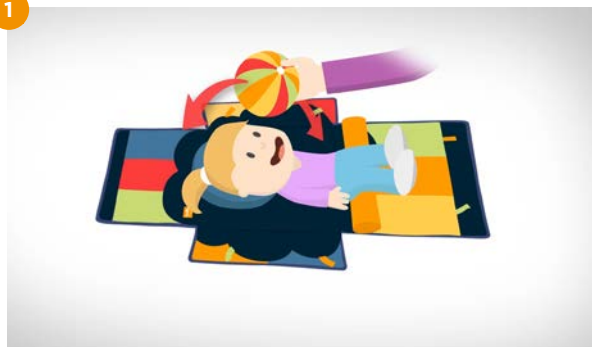
When lying on their backs it is easiest for children to focus their eyes on a dangling object. First they learn to follow it through a quarter of a circle using just their eye movements, then through half a circle moving their head as well as eyes. As they become aware of their own hands and feet and take them to their mouths, their eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills are developing.

Physical goals

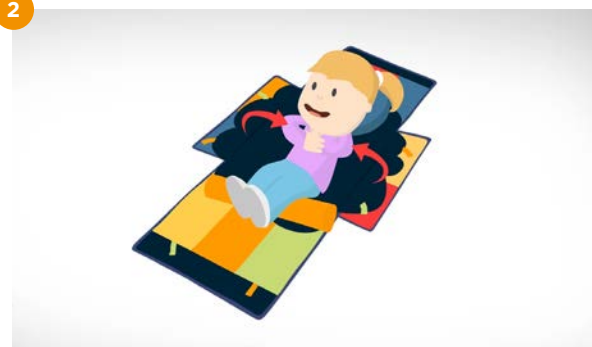
Children will benefit from strengthened neck, tummy, shoulder and hip bending (flexor) muscles because they have to lift their heads, arms and legs up against gravity.



Supine (Back Lying) Activity Suggestions



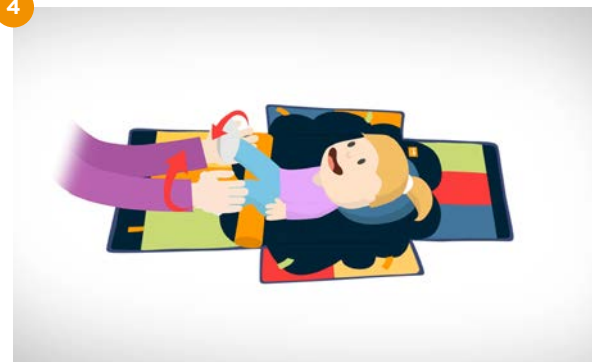
Hold a brightly coloured object (such as a scarf or pom-pom) about 30-40cm above your child's face. Move the object from left to right through a quarter circle, then back, going slowly enough so baby's eyes can follow it. Make the task a little more difficult by holding the object 40-50cm from her face and moving it through a semi-circle to encourage head movements. To help her learn new words, bring the toys you use into her line of vision before you name them.



Encourage your child to bring her hands together on her chest. Place your hands behind her shoulders to encourage her arms to come forward.



With the same set-up, use the hip positioning strap to stabilise your child's hips. Encourage her to reach across her body with her left hand to a toy on the right side, and vice versa. Place your hand behind her shoulder to assist if necessary. To make this a bit more difficult, remove the pelvic strap and move the toy a little further out of reach. Your child should need to shift her weight at her hips to reach the toy. This is a building block for the transition of rolling later on.



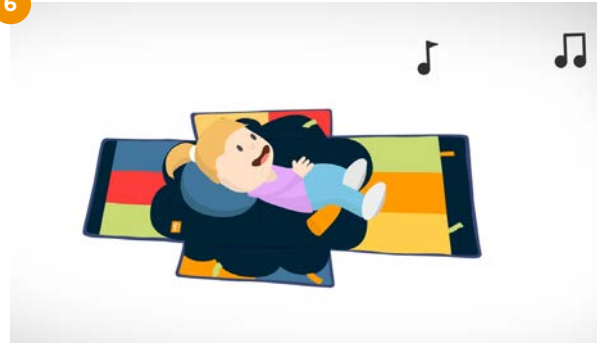
Hold onto your child's feet and help her to kick or "bicycle" her legs. This helps to strengthen tummy, legs and feet, and the reciprocal movement is one which is needed for later weight bearing or movement.

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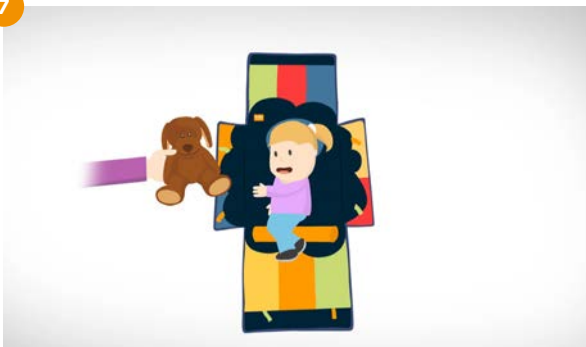
Bring your child's hands and feet together. This midline position is good for symmetry, and baby is beginning to learn to use both sides of her body together.

6



As she can see your face easily, it is also a good opportunity to play peek-a-boo games and to sing rhymes with actions to help to develop her attention, for example "this is the way we wash our hands", "the wheels on the bus" etc. Copy any sounds she makes back to her. Change the tone (intonation) and emphasis (inflection) of your own voice to link to the movements and to help her focus on the key words.

7



To encourage rolling, place baby midway between back lying and side lying. Encourage her to reach or kick for a toy so she can begin to roll onto her tummy in a controlled, fluid manner. Help her to move at first by moving her hips or legs, while she works to turn her shoulders.

8



Make rolling a little more difficult by holding the lower half of the body steady using your hands or the positioning strap. Encourage the child to roll leading with her top half. Position toys just out of reach of baby. As her top half turns, allow her lower half to follow.

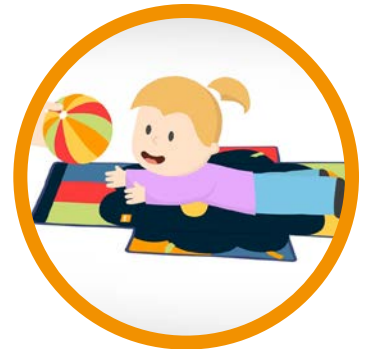


Playpak Factsheet #04: Playpak Therapy Guide - Prone (Tummy Lying)

All of the activities outlined in this Factsheet are also available to follow by using our animated and narrated online guide. Watch it at www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak

Prone (Tummy Lying) - why?

Tummy time is a difficult position for children as it means they have to struggle against gravity to lift their heads, however it's especially important when developing and strengthening muscles. Remember to use easier activities at first.



Cognitive goals

As children learn to hold their heads up and prop on their forearms, their shoulders and arms are giving sensory feedback about their position in relation to their body and environment. As this works together with the eyes and environment when reaching for toys, their spatial awareness is also developing.

Communication goals

Tummy lying may make it more difficult for your child to make sounds (vocalise), as their chest is compressed in this position. However communication goals are a good way to provide the motivation they need to practice this important developmental position.

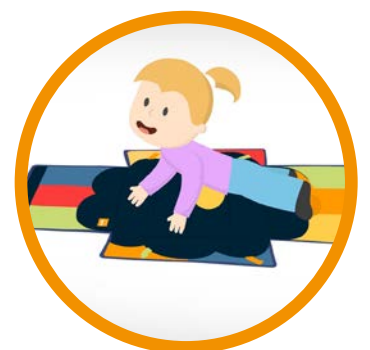


Physical goals

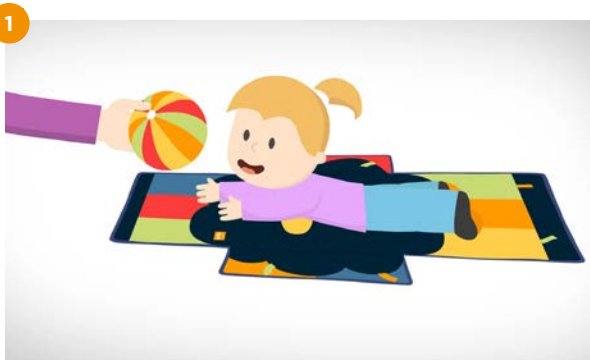
Lifting a child's head and shoulders up against gravity helps to strengthen the straightening (extensor) muscles of the trunk. This is helpful for children with floppy (low tone) muscles. It is also an important foundation for the development of sitting.

Sensory goals

With reasonable head control, children will be able to play for some time in this position, continuing to strengthen their muscles, while exploring their environment and looking around.



Prone (Tummy Lying) Activity Suggestions



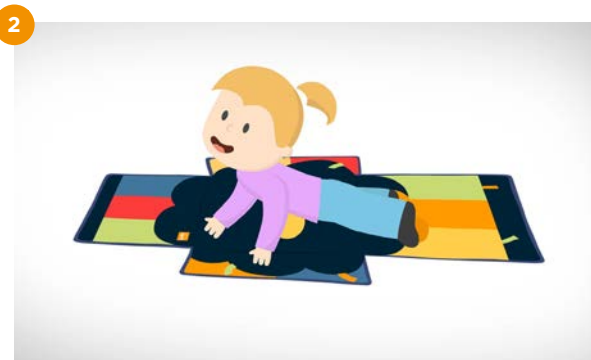
Encourage your child to lift her head up – use a favourite toy to motivate her. To make this a little more difficult, try moving the toy slowly from side to side, so baby has to turn her head to follow it.

Sing your child's favourite songs and action rhymes to encourage him to look up at you. Change the tone (intonation) and emphasis (inflection) of your own voice to link to the movements and to help your child to focus on the key words.

To help her learn new words, remember to bring any toys you use into her line of vision before you name them.



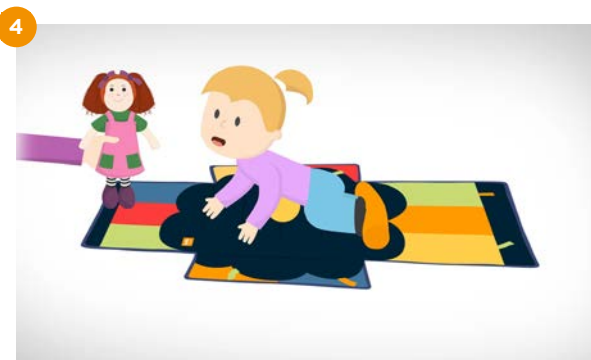
While baby has her head lifted up, encourage her to reach and grasp with one hand, then the other. This helps to develop trunk and lower spine extension – the start of the lumbar curve. The weight shift involved when using one hand at a time uses more complex muscle control – this helps later for sitting up and using the arms against gravity.



Encourage baby to “push-up” on straightened (extended) arms with open hands. This will strengthen her shoulder and upper trunk, and encourages weight bearing through her arms – a building block for four-point kneeling. It is also a very early building block for finer motor skills which depend on stability at the shoulder for the control needed.

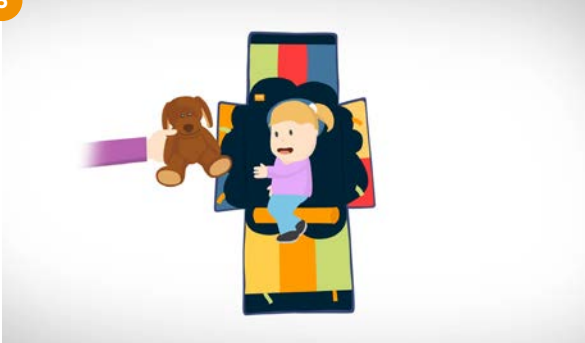
Sing your child's favourite songs and action rhymes to encourage her to look up at you. Change the tone (intonation) and emphasis (inflection) of your own voice to link to the movements and to help your child to focus on the key words.

To help her learn new words, remember to bring any toys you use into her line of vision before you name them.



Place your child in a curled up position on her tummy, ensuring her airway is clear. Make sure her hips, knees and ankles are bent (flexed), and place a roll firmly behind her feet. Show her an exciting toy, and she should start kicking, pushing herself forward. Tickle baby's feet, and place them against the roll to encourage movement. This is a building block for commando (belly) crawling and four point crawling.

5



To encourage rolling, place baby midway between back lying and side lying. Encourage her to reach or kick for a toy so she can begin to roll onto her tummy in a controlled, fluid manner. Help her to move at first by moving her hips or legs, while she works to turn her shoulders.

6



Make rolling a little more difficult by holding the lower half of the body steady using your hands or the positioning strap. Encourage the child to roll leading with her top half. Position toys just out of reach of baby. As her top half turns, allow her lower half to follow.



Playpak Factsheet #05: Playpak Therapy Guide - Active Floor Sitting

All of the activities outlined in this Factsheet are also available to follow by using our animated and narrated online guide. Watch it at www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak

Active Floor Sitting - Why?

Sitting is considered a vital part of the developmental sequence because of the other skills which are based upon its foundation.



Cognitive goals

Sitting up helps children to realise that their environment is three dimensional. It's also a more social posture – the majority of us communicate with each other from an upright posture, whether sitting or standing.

Communication goals

The social posture of sitting is an excellent position for focusing on introducing new words and phrases, especially describing words and action words. If your child's floor sitting skills are still developing, remember that you may have to provide more support if the goal is learning new words.



Physical goals

The main physical purposes of sitting are to stabilise the trunk and pelvis, allowing the arms and hands to be free. In turn this allows handling of objects, exploration, increased learning opportunities and interaction with family and their surrounding environment. Children can be encouraged to reach, grasp and release toys, bang blocks together in midline, and throw things!

Sensory goals

With head control developing well, and when securely supported in a sitting posture, a child's hands are free to explore a much greater range of textures, shapes, and sizes.



Active Floor Sitting Activity Suggestions

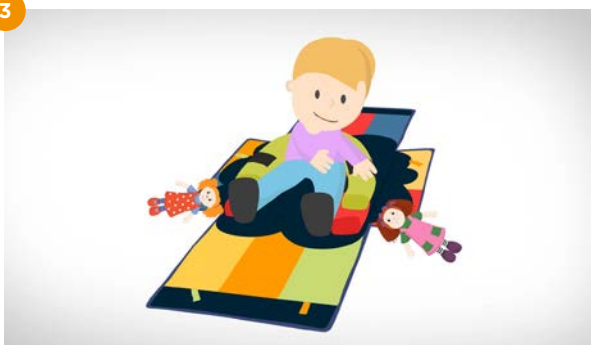


Encourage your child to reach for toys while sitting. At first, place toys within easy reach and encourage grasping, moving from hand to hand, banging together, and throwing.



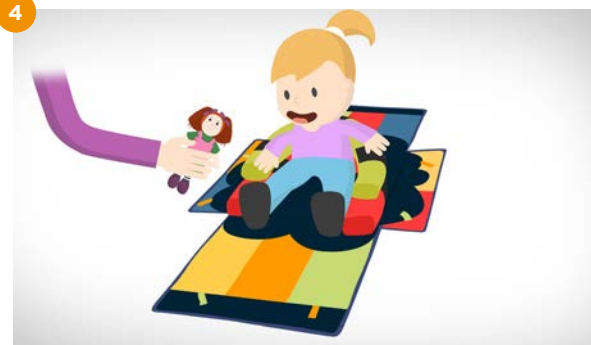
Encourage your child to reach for toys while sitting. Make this play more difficult by placing objects a little way in front of baby, so she has to reach further forward to get them.

Ask your child to reach for a different toy each time from a choice of 2 or 3, (for example, "where's the ball?"). Change the tone and emphasis of your own voice to link to the movements and to help your child to focus on the key words.



While sitting place toys to either side, encouraging reaching out to the side. All of these movements help to develop neck and trunk muscles, eye-hand co-ordination and weight shift.

To help your child learn new words, remember to bring any toys you use into her line of vision before you name them.



Hold a brightly coloured object 12-15" in front of your child's face. Move slowly in a semi-circle. She will learn to turn her head in sitting, using her hip and pelvic muscles to keep her steady against gravity, and using trunk muscles to rotate from one side to another.

To help your child learn new words, remember to bring any toys you use into her line of vision before you name them.



Playpak Factsheet #06: FAQs

What is the difference between Playpak and Leckey's Early Activity System, (EAS)?

Playpak simplified the concept of Leckey's EAS for three reasons: portability, affordability and development through family participation. The EAS continues to be a more clinically-focused and larger product, containing components which facilitate more complex therapeutic positions, such as side-lying and four-point kneeling. However, a child can still achieve all the same exercises with the Playpak given the close guidance from the therapist.



How do I know if Playpak is suitable for my child?

Playpak suits special needs babies and children ranging from **birth to approximately 48 months, and those at Gross Motor Function Classification Scale (GMFCS) levels I-V**. If in any doubt, the therapist's guidance and recommendations should be followed.

How long should I use Playpak for each session?

Children may like some positions or activities more than others, usually the ones they are happy and able to do for longer. It may depend on whether your child's muscles are tight (high tone) or floppy (low tone), their level of development, or tolerance of certain positions. If the child is in any discomfort, take them out of that position and either have a rest or try something a little easier. Bear in mind that the time of day and the child's mood will also have an effect on how long it will be appropriate to use Playpak for each session.

How many times per week should I use Playpak?

If your child enjoys and is happy achieving a variety of positions using Playpak, then a daily therapy routine incorporating Playpak time may be helpful.

My child has quite high/low muscle tone. Can they use Playpak?

If the child has extremes of tone, they may find it harder to achieve and sustain some positions. It is important to go at their pace, and to alternate challenging positions with easier ones until they build and develop their abilities a little more.

My child does not like certain positions – what should I do?

It's possible that some children may find some positions or activities too difficult. Take a break and have a rest. You can revisit the challenging position or activity later.

My child has a visual impairment. Can they use Playpak?

Yes. Playpak provides a safe way for a child with visual impairment to play and develop. With their hands free to explore their surroundings, incorporate sensory toys to develop your child's sensory and perceptual awareness.



Is there any reason why I should not use Playpak with my child?

There are so many possibilities for simple, safe play and development activities with Playpak that we don't anticipate any problems. However, as some positions may not be medically recommended for your child to use, it's very important that the child's therapist determines how the Playpak is used.



Playpak Factsheet #07: Product Sizing

Technical Table

Age: Birth to 48 months

	Length	Width	Depth
1. Folded Bag	44cm/17in	49cm/19in	15cm/5.9in
2. Unfolded Bag, (Floor mat)	134cm/53in	75cm/30in	NA
3. Long roll	52cm/20in	9cm/3.5in	7cm/2.8in
4. Short roll	28cm/11in	9cm/3.5in	7cm/2.8in
5. Positioning roll	66cm/26in	8cm/3.1in	NA

	Length	Width	Depth	Angle
6. Head/tummy support	22cm/8.7in	26cm/10in	25cm/9.8in	6.5°

	Height	Depth	Min Seat Width	Max Seat Width
7. Large horseshoe support	11cm/4.3in	10cm/3.9in	20cm/7.9in	25cm/9.8in
8. Small horseshoe support	7cm/2.8in	9cm/3.5in	20cm/7.9in	25cm/9.8in