

Bottom shuffling babies

Information for parents

What is bottom shuffling?

Bottom-shuffling babies sit on their bottoms and move themselves around using their legs, and sometimes their arms to propel themselves, rather than crawling. They may use a variety of techniques to do this; some lean to the side and use one arm and leg, some use both legs together and some bounce. Bottom-shuffling is often seen in babies who have not spent time playing on their tummy.

Most bottom shufflers are “late walkers” (typically anything from 18 – 24 months of age). Typically, they will often lift their legs up when you attempt to support them in standing.

Is it normal for children to bottom shuffle?

Yes- some children will master their motor milestones early and others will be much later and some may miss out on developmental milestones all together – such as crawling. Some babies will learn to bottom shuffle instead – this is a normal variant.

The rate at which a child develops is affected by many factors including temperament, environment, genetics/family history and development opportunities (for example, if they have spent a long time in hospital or have not had the opportunity to play on the floor).

Why do some babies bottom shuffle?

Babies who bottom shuffle typically have not tolerated being placed on their tummy and therefore do not develop the strength in their arms, neck and back muscles to enable them to push themselves up, move around on their tummy or crawl. They often prefer to lie on their back or to be supported in a sitting position.

These babies often do not learn to roll from their back onto their side or their tummy or vice versa. This makes it very difficult for them to learn to sit themselves up from lying down.

In general, babies who bottom shuffle have joints that are more supple/flexible than average. This makes it more difficult for the child to stabilise their joints to take weight through their arms and legs, making it harder for them to crawl and to stand and walk.

Babies who bottom shuffle can move very quickly and their hands are free to play with toys. They therefore often have little motivation to pull up to stand on their feet or use their arms to crawl.

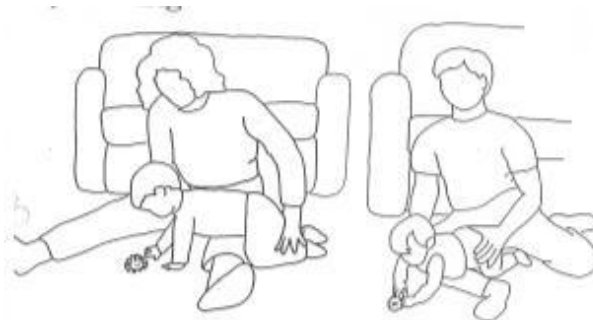
How can I help my child?

Encourage tummy time so that they can learn how to weight bear through their arms and their shoulder girdle to become more stable.



If they do not tolerate lying flat on the floor, give them some support under their chest using a rolled up towel or lie them across your legs. Sit on the sofa, lean back and lay your child on your chest (progress to lying on the floor with your child on your chest).

Encourage your child to shuffle over obstacles on the floor (such as over your legs/cushions, etc.) so that they have to bring their weight forwards over their arms to move themselves forwards.



Help your child to kneel

Encourage your child to pull themselves up onto their knees, against you or a piece of furniture. Kneeling helps to improve stability around the hips and lower body.

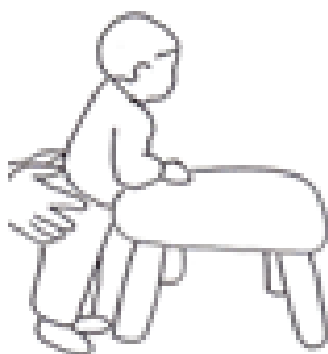


Help your child to take weight through their legs

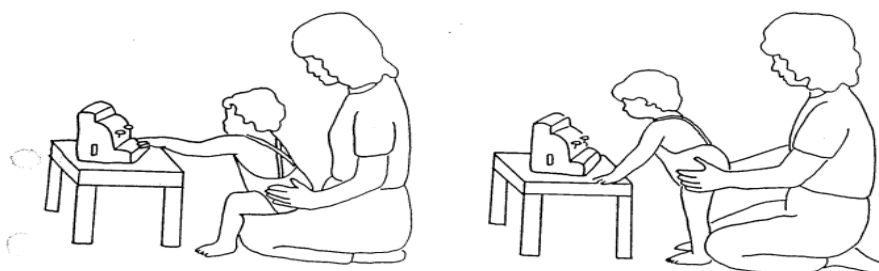
Sit on the floor with your legs crossed; sit your child on your lap with their legs over yours and their knees bent so that their feet are flat on the floor. If your child tends to lean backwards, use your body to keep their back straight and leaning forwards slightly to stop them leaning back.



Encourage your child to lean forwards to reach for toys/objects; progress to reaching down to retrieve objects from the floor.



Help your child to pull to stand from your lap



Kneel or sit cross legged on the floor in front of a sofa or coffee table, etc. Sit your child on your lap, making sure that their hips and knees are at 90 degrees and their feet are flat on the floor. Place an interesting object/toy on the surface and encourage your child to reach forwards for the object. As they straighten their knees, move their hips forwards and up, over their feet, supporting them around their hips with your hands. Bottom shufflers tend to try to stand with their bottom behind their feet so they need help to bring their hips forwards, over their feet. Encourage them to lean their tummy against the table/surface. When your

child learns to stand up independently you no longer need to support them around their hips.

You can help your child learn to sit down by bringing their hips back and down onto your lap.

Will a “sit in” baby walker or bouncer help my child to learn to stand and walk?

No- these do not help children to develop their ability to stand or walk and may encourage your child to walk on their tip-toes. They have also been the cause of many serious accidents.

When to seek further advice/assessment from health professionals.

- If your child has difficulty moving their arms or legs (e.g. if they appear to be weak, floppy or stiff)
- If your child appears to be using one side of their body more than the other. This may be the arm and/or leg (do they have a strong preference to turn their head to one side?)
- If your child always falls to one side or backwards when they lose their balance
- When your child stands, are they unable to bring one or both feet flat on the floor or is their foot position very different on both feet
- If your child shows significant delay in other areas of their development (e.g. play and language, fine motor skills)
- If your child appears to be having problems with their vision or hearing.

If you are worried speak to your Health Visitor, GP or paediatrician.

Contact telephone numbers

If you have any concerns, contact:

Physiotherapy Department,
Royal Hospital for Children and Young People
50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh
EH16 4SA

Telephone: **0131 312 1079**