

THE GOOD: Play saucers give caregivers a break and they're fun for babies. They allow us to put our babies down in a place where they won't roll away or get into mischief. They also give babies a chance to try out new skills and sensations as they swat at toys, turn plastic pages, push buttons to activate lights and music, and rock and bounce themselves in their stationary play structure.



THE BAD:

Poor posturing

Poor standing position

Poor sense of balance control

Decreased interaction

Decreased exploration of the environment

Risk of overuse



***WAIT TO PLACE BABY IN EXERSAUCE UNTIL HE CAN SIT INDEPENDENTLY, WITHOUT HAVING TO USE ARMS FOR BALANCE (TYPICALLY AROUND 6 OR 7 MONTHS)***

**LIMIT USE TO 15 MINUTES TOTAL PER DAY!**

### ***Play saucer Facts and Finds:***

Poor posturing. When babies are placed in a play saucer, they have a tendency to shift into a position that tips their head back too far, their shoulders up too high, their shoulder blades pulled too far back, their hips pulled too far apart by a stiff piece of fabric, and their back too arched as their belly sways forward.

Poor standing position. Play saucers encourage babies to stand by locking out their knees in order to compensate for weakness because they're placed in a standing position before they are ready for it. They also cause babies to bear weight on their toes instead of on their whole foot, which is known to contribute to the over-development of calf muscles and, if severe, can lead to toe walking.

Poor sense of balance control. Babies who spend time in play saucers end up in a position where their center of gravity remains forward, thus interfering with their development of balance. Babies also have difficulty developing a sense of balance control while in a play saucer because they can't see their feet, which is something they need to be able to do when learning how to stand and balance independently.

Decreased exploration of the environment. Active exploration of the environment allows babies to develop their cognitive and motor skills, especially when trying to obtain objects out of their reach. This encourages rolling, scooting, crawling, and pulling to stand. Although play saucers include many toys providing sensory stimulation and opportunities for problem solving, all toys are set right in front of them, thus depriving them of opportunities to challenge their gross motor development in order to explore their environment.

Decreased interaction. Babies need human interaction more than anything else in the first year of life

Risk of overuse. It is easy to lose track of time while baby is in there and it is too often used as baby's first resort rather last.

Most play saucers can be used with infants as young as 4 months. But waiting until they are older and can sit well on their own will ensure they have adequate trunk strength and possibly decrease their tendency to assume poor posture.

Play saucers should be a once-a-day activity if you're going to use one. Pick one 15-minute period or a few short times during the day that will necessitate the use of a play saucer. Set a timer because you WILL lose track of time, especially if baby is having a good time in there.

Give baby plenty of time to play on the floor or on an exercise ball during the day. Motor skills develop from experience and practice, and the best place for babies to get this practice is on the floor! They need time on their tummy, back, both sides, sitting on their bottom, and rocking on hands and knees in order to build skills toward rolling, crawling, and walking.

<http://mamaot.com/exersaucers-the-good-the-bad-the-better/>