

When and why physical therapy is recommended

- Earlier physical therapy is started the better.
- Provides instructions for exercises, positioning activities and developmental activities to encourage your baby to turn his head easily in both directions.

How will the physical therapist help?

- Teach you how to work on exercises with your baby at home.
- Explain the importance of the exercises, how often to do them and how long physical therapy treatment may last.
- Show you different positions to encourage your baby to play when awake and supervised that will stretch and strengthen his neck muscles.



Follow up by physical therapist

- Once your baby is able to turn his/her head to both sides, no longer has a head tilt, and is able to perform motor skills at his/her age level, your physical therapist will discharge you from physical therapy.
- Your physical therapist may ask you to come back in 3-12 months for a check up to make sure your baby is progressing well.

This brochure was written to help families understand torticollis and plagiocephaly.

Contact your doctor or a physical therapist who specializes in working with babies with torticollis for exercises specific to your baby.



Torticollis and Plagiocephaly:

What You Need To Know

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What You Need To Know About Torticollis and Plagiocephaly

What is Torticollis?

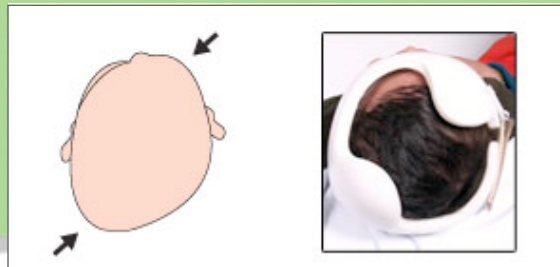
- Torticollis is the condition that occurs when the muscles that runs up and toward the back of the neck becomes tight or weakened. This causes the head to tilt to the side of the tight muscles, and causes the face to turn to the opposite side.



- It may be present at birth or develop after birth.
- If you have concerns that your baby is having problems turning his head to both sides easily, discuss this with you doctor. Your doctor may send you to a physical therapist. Your doctor and/or physical therapist can give you activities to help your baby turn his/her head in both directions.
- When treatment for torticollis is started early, the improvements will be faster.

What is plagiocephaly?

- Plagiocephaly is another word for the flattened area of the head that forms on the back of the head. This may be present at birth or develop after birth.
- If your baby has torticollis and keeps his/her head turned to one side, he/she may develop this flattening. Your doctor and/or physical therapist will discuss other positions to place your baby to prevent this.
- Flattening may cause your baby's face to look uneven around the ear, chin, forehead, or eye. This should improve with repositioning and treatment.
- If these activities and physical therapy do not improve the flattening by 5-6 months of age, your doctor and/or physical therapist may discuss the use of a shaping helmet.
- Shaping helmets are used to shape the head as your baby's brain grows. Your doctor will refer you to a doctor specializing in the treatment of plagiocephaly.
- This doctor will discuss the different types of helmets to help your baby and the cost of these.



It is important that your baby be placed on his/her back to sleep. The American Academy of Pediatrics says this helps to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

What can you be doing at home?

- Tummy time or prone play while **awake** and **supervised** is very important to your baby's development. Tummy time is important in developing your baby's muscles to hold his head in the middle and develop strong arms to roll over and learn to sit up.



- Change the play positions for your baby between tummy time, side lying, and sitting helps your baby to turn his head to both sides.
- Limit the time your baby stays in a bouncy seat or carrier to prevent flattened on the back of his/her head.
- Change feeding to each side when breast or bottle feeding to encourage head turning to both side.
- Alternate the placement of toys to each side to encourage looking to both sides.

