

# What Is Torticollis?

**Torticollis** means one or more muscles in your child's neck are tight or weak, causing the child to bend and/or turn their head to one side most of the time. Usually they will bend to one side but turn to the opposite side. Sometimes a child will prefer to bend and turn to the same side, but this is less common.

## WHY DO CHILDREN GET TORTICOLLIS?

Children can be born with muscle tightness in their neck from their position in the womb. They can also get muscle tightness after birth by spending a lot of time on their backs and not enough time in other positions, such as on their tummies or sides.

## WHAT WE KNOW

Research supports the recommendation that the **more often children do tummy time** and the **more often their neck is straight or turned to the opposite side**, the faster torticollis usually goes away.

**Fun Fact!** By 3-4 months of age, the ideal amount of tummy time is 60-81 minutes a day to help children meet their physical developmental milestones.



## WHICH TYPE OF TORTICOLLIS DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE?

\_\_\_ **Right neck muscles are tight:** Your child often bends their neck to the right and turns their face to the left.

**Treatment:** Bending left ear to left shoulder and turning their face towards right shoulder.

\_\_\_ **Left neck muscles tight:** Your child often bends their neck to the left and turns their face to the right.

**Treatment:** Bending right ear to right shoulder and turning their face towards the left shoulder.

\_\_\_ **Bends right and turns right:** Your child bends their neck to the right and also turns their face towards the right.

**Treatment:** Bending left ear to left shoulder, turning the face towards the left shoulder.

\_\_\_ **Bends left and turns left:** Your child often bends their neck to the left and also turns their face towards the left.

**Treatment:** Bending right ear to right shoulder and turning the face towards the right shoulder

## PHYSICAL THERAPY WILL TEACH YOU HOW TO:

- Stretch your child's tight neck, shoulder, stomach and back muscles
- Strengthen your child's weak muscles in their neck, shoulder, stomach and back
- Help your child achieve physical movements equally on both sides of the body and support your child's physical development

## THIS WILL HELP TO:

- Create more symmetry in your child's body so they can control their neck, torso and arms better
- Improve their ability to hold their neck straight without tilting as well as be able to look to both sides during play
- Allow them to move both sides of their body equally when rolling, sitting, crawling and walking

## HOW AND WHEN TO DO THESE THINGS WITH YOUR CHILD TO HELP THEM GET BETTER:

These exercises and positioning suggestions are meant to be done all throughout the day during activities you are already doing with your baby, such as feeding, diaper changes, play and sleeping. Doing these exercises regularly will help your child make the most progress.



## WHY IS ALL OF THIS IMPORTANT?

If your child's torticollis is not properly treated or does not get better, it can result in visual problems, neck and back alignment problems and balance problems.

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE NECK AND THE HEAD SHAPE:

Your child's head may have flatness at birth due to the position in the womb or it can become flat after birth. It becomes flat after birth when their neck is turned one way most of the time. Infants' heads cannot grow into a flat surface; they grow in other directions, leaving that side of the head flat. From 0 to 6 months of age is the best time to get them off the flat part of their head to help it round out as much as possible.



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