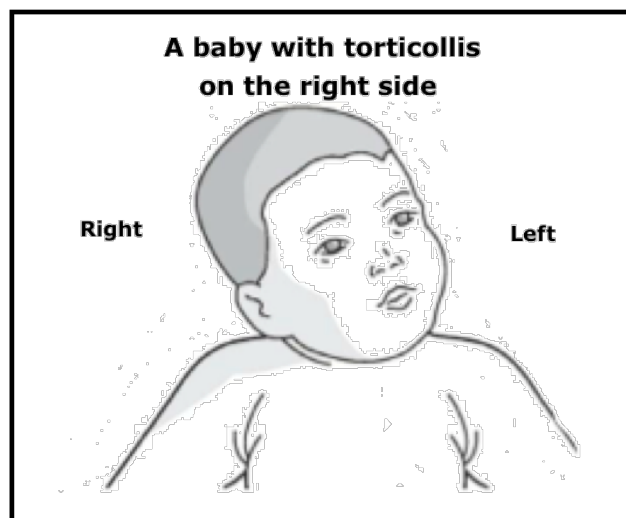


## Right Sided Torticollis

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Torticollis is a condition where a neck muscle called the sternocleidomastoid is shorter on one side of the neck than the other. Torticollis causes your baby's head to be pulled towards the short muscle and their chin turned away to the opposite side. The increased pressure on one side of the back of the skull can result in changes to the head shape, a condition known as plagiocephaly.

Right-sided torticollis involves a tilt to the right and rotation of the skull to the left, likely to result in a flattened left posterior skull, prominent left cheekbone and left ear.



### Signs and symptoms

**- Preference for turning the head to one side:**

Your baby will have problems turning their head from side to side and will often keep their head turned only to one preferred side (left side).

**- Lateral tilt of the head to one side:**

Your baby may hold their head tilted to the right with one ear closer to the shoulder. Parents often see this head tilt when their baby is sitting in the car seat.

**- Poorly shaped head:**

Your baby may have a flattening or bulging on the back or left side of the head. Severe muscle tightness may also change the shape of your baby's facial features on the left side of the face. For example, one ear may be slightly higher than the other, or the forehead and cheek more prominent on the affected side.

**- Behaviour:**

Your baby may become fussy when you try to change the position of their head. When placed on their tummy, your baby may become fussy because they are not able to lift or turn their head.

### Causes

Although the exact cause of torticollis is unknown, there are two main theories of how it can happen:

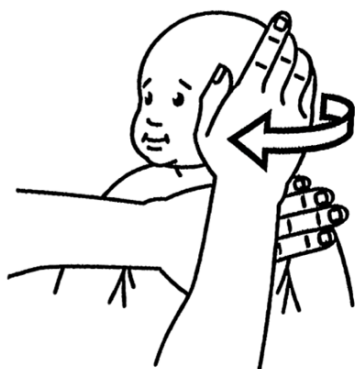
- The neck muscle being overstretched during birth and healing with scar tissue causing the muscle to become tight and shorter
- Reduced space in the womb for the baby

## Treatment

Your physiotherapist will prescribe exercises that will consist of an all-day positioning programme and gentle stretches to lengthen the shortened muscle and strengthen the weak muscles. The therapist will monitor your baby's progress and continue to assess and treat as necessary.

## Stretches

Gentle stretches will help your baby achieve full neck motion. Be sure to work gently within your baby's tolerance. Slowly increase the motion over time. These stretches should be held for about 30 seconds, however stop sooner if the baby starts to resist the motion or becomes fussy. You can hold the stretch up to one minute if your baby is very relaxed. Use your voice or favourite toys to distract and soothe your baby.



### Stretch 1 Right head turning

Lay your baby on a firm surface (e.g. changing table). Place your left hand on your baby's left shoulder. Get your baby's attention so that he/she turns their head to the right. Place your right hand over your baby's left ear. Gently hold your baby's head in this position, but do not force. Hold the stretch as tolerated. This stretch should be repeated several times throughout the day. A helpful reminder is to stretch each time nappy change.

### Stretch 2 Left head tilt

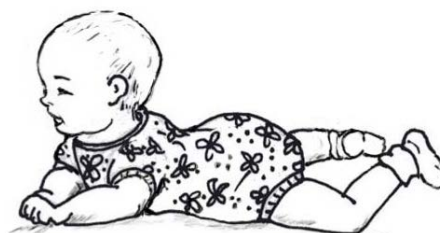
Lay your baby on their back. Use one hand to gently hold your baby's right shoulder against the surface. Place your other hand around the back of your baby's head. Slowly bring your baby's left ear towards their shoulder.



You can also perform this same stretch while holding your baby on their right side. Place your left arm through your baby's legs and hold the right shoulder down. Place your right hand over your baby's right ear and gently stretch the head sideways. Gently hold your baby's head in this position, but do not force. Hold the stretch as tolerated. This stretch should be repeated several times throughout the day.

## Tummy Time

Your baby needs to spend time on their tummy every day while they are awake and to strengthen the muscles in their neck, shoulders and back. The aim of this is to reduce the pressure on the back of the skull. Tummy time can begin with a newborn baby, however should always be supervised. By 3 months of age, a baby's neck muscles are strong enough to hold up their head for a longer time. Place your baby on their tummy several times throughout the day for 5-10 minutes, aiming slowly build up to 30 minutes total over the day.

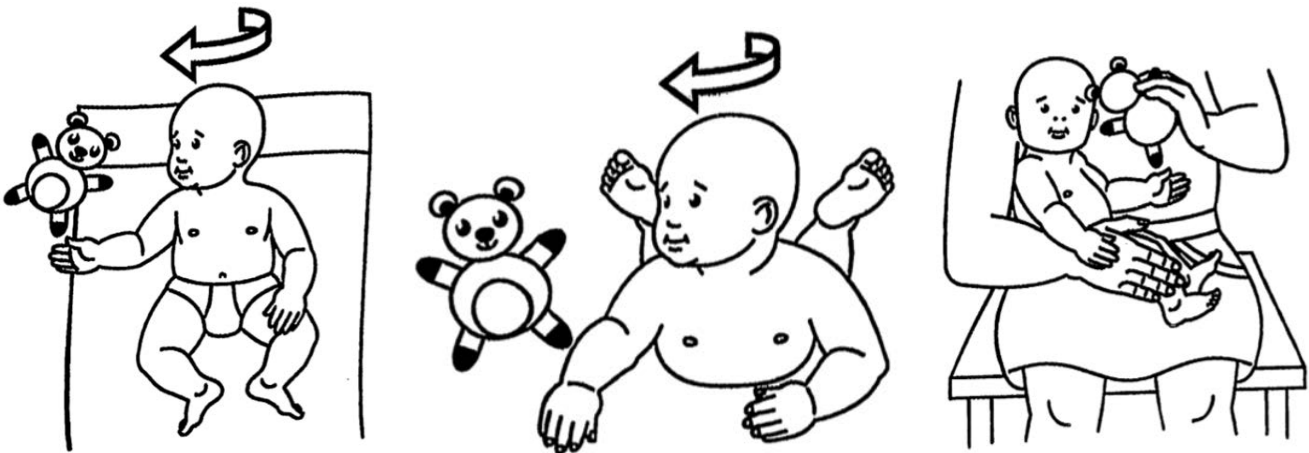


## Positioning

Use these carrying positions to encourage your baby's head to be turned out to the right or tilted to the left.



Encourage your baby to turn their head to the right by providing stimulation on the right side. For younger babies (less than 3 months) use your face, voice or toys on the baby's right side. For older babies (greater than 3 months) talk to the child and place toys on their right side.



## Feeding

When feeding your baby, try to hold your baby so that their head is in a straight position or turned to the right side. You can also encourage your baby to turn their head by using the rooting reflex. Before feeding, stroke the side of your baby's right cheek to encourage head turning or rooting. You should repeat this 3 to 4 times before feeding your baby.



## Visual Tracking

When lying on their back, help your baby to look at and follow faces or toys. Slowly move the toy to the right side in order to encourage head turning. Repeat this activity while your baby is lying on their tummy or sitting with support.

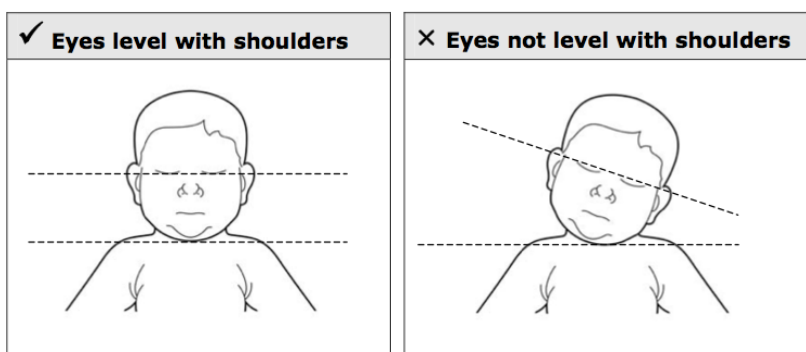
## Transportation

A rear facing car seat with low harness slots and a crotch strap that fits close to the infant's body is the best option for transportation. Once the harness is snug and secure, use **rolled towels or light blankets** to pad around the baby's head and sides to keep the head and body straight. Check that the eyes are level with the shoulders.



Tips for securing your baby in the infant-only car seat:

- Make sure the baby's back and bottom are flat against the car seat back
- The harness should be threaded through the slots on the car seat at or below the baby's shoulders
- Tighten the harness snugly so it will not allow any slack
- The retainer clip is at the baby's armpit level to hold the straps in place
- The seat is rear facing and reclined no more than 45 degrees



## How long will I have to do these exercises?

This will depend on several things such as your child's age and their progress. Your Physiotherapist will check your child's head and neck movements at each visit. The recovery process can take between 2 weeks through to 12 months depending on the severity of the condition and your child's progress. Your physiotherapist will tell you when to stop doing the exercises.

## SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden unexpected death of a baby from no cause. The current recommendations for preventing SIDS are:

### Dos:

- Place your baby on their back to sleep from birth
- Sleep your baby with their face and head uncovered at all times
- Dress your baby in clothing appropriate for the weather
- Encourage tummy time when your baby is awake and being supervised by an adult

### Don'ts:

- Never sleep your baby on their tummy or side in any environment, even when resting on an adult's chest
- Never leave your baby surrounded by loose bedding, toys or clothing
- Don't sleep your baby on a tri-pillow (boomerang pillow), bean bag or hammock
- Don't expose your baby to cigarette smoke

