

Left Torticollis and Your Baby

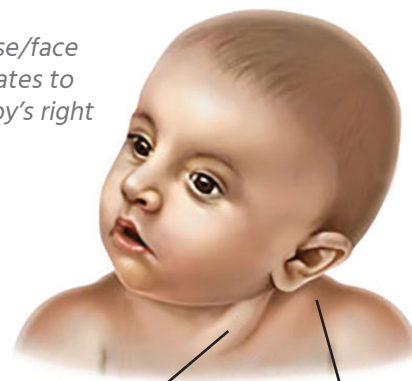
What is torticollis?

Torticollis refers to an abnormal resting position of the head and neck due to tight neck muscles. While the head tilts to one side, the chin points in the opposite direction. A baby with torticollis may display tightness in their whole body, irregular posture, and/or a noticeably flattened head.



For most babies, torticollis can be fixed with simple stretches, exercises, and position changes. The earlier it is recognized, the better the outcome. If torticollis isn't corrected, it can cause additional problems with your baby's development.

*Nose/face
rotates to
baby's right*



*Tight neck muscle
on baby's left side*

*Left ear tilts
to left shoulder*

What are the signs of left torticollis?

Baby prefers to turn their head to the right

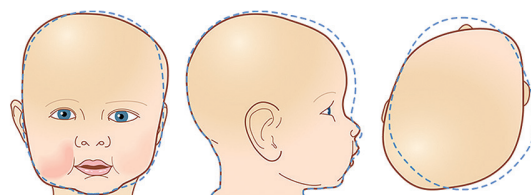
Your baby will have problems turning their head from side to side and will often keep their head turned only toward the right side. (This is called left torticollis because the muscle on the left side is tight.).

Tilting the head to the left

Your baby may hold their head tilted to one side with the left ear closer to the shoulder. Parents often see this when baby is sitting in a car seat or in other upright positions.

Poorly shaped head

Your baby may have a flat spot or bulge on the back or side of the head. This condition is called plagiocephaly. With left torticollis, you may see flattening on the back right side of their head.



Severe muscle tightness may also change the shape of your baby's facial features on one side. For example, one ear may be slightly more forward than the other.

Behavior

Your baby may become fussy when you try to change the position of their head.

What can I do to help my newborn baby?

Positioning

Look at your baby's head position throughout the day. Your baby prefers to turn to the RIGHT. Help your baby to keep their head straight and in line with their body. To help your baby rotate their head to the LEFT, try approaching baby from the LEFT more often. Your baby will naturally look for you. Do this when baby is in their crib, car seat or being held by someone else.

Feeding

When feeding your baby, look at the position of the head. Try to hold your baby so that their head is in a straight position or turned to the LEFT side.

You can also use their rooting reflex to help them turn to the LEFT. Before feeding, stroke the side of your baby's LEFT cheek to encourage head turning or rooting. Do this 3 to 4 times before feeding your baby.

Holding

Your baby will prefer to look towards your face. When holding your baby, use your body to help keep the head in a straight position or turned to the LEFT side.



Range of motion exercises

Gentle stretches may help your baby gain full neck motion. Be sure to work gently within your baby's tolerance. Slowly increase the motion over time. Find the position and time of day that works best for your baby.

Hold each stretch for about 30 seconds. You can hold the stretch up to 1 minute if your baby is very relaxed. Repeat these three stretches several times throughout the day or with each diaper change.



If your baby fusses or resists in any way, stop stretching. Distract and soothe baby with a toy or your voice, then try again.

1. LEFT head rotation (Picture 1)

Place your baby on their back. With one hand, gently hold baby's RIGHT shoulder down and against the surface. Place your open palm gently on your baby's cheek. Slowly help your baby turn their head to the LEFT side.



Left head rotation exercise

2. RIGHT lateral head tilt (Picture 2)

Place your baby on their back. Use one hand to gently hold your baby's LEFT shoulder down and against the surface. Place your other hand around the side of your baby's head. Slowly help bring your baby's RIGHT ear towards their shoulder.

You can also perform this same stretch while holding your baby in a side-lying position on your lap. Place your baby on their LEFT side. Place one hand in front of your baby holding their LEFT shoulder. Use your other hand to slowly help your baby bring the RIGHT ear up towards their shoulder.



Right lateral head tilt exercise

3. Football hold stretch (Picture 3)

With your baby lying on their LEFT side, with their back towards your chest, have your child straddle your RIGHT arm. Reach across to the child's LEFT shoulder. Gently depress the LEFT shoulder toward your body with your right hand. Use your LEFT palm to stretch their neck up, creating space between shoulder and ear. Hold the stretch 2-3 minutes, or as long as baby will comfortably tolerate. Repeat 3-4 times throughout the day.



Football hold stretch

Activities to encourage active head movement

Encourage your baby to actively move their head to gain full neck motion. Repeat these activities several times throughout the day.

1. Tummy time (when baby is awake and directly supervised by an adult)

Place your baby on their tummy several times throughout the day. Added together, these times should total at least 30 minutes to 1 hour per day. Choose a time when your baby is awake and comfortable. If needed, place a pillow, cushion, rolled towel or boppy® under their chest to make the exercise easier.

2. Visual tracking

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

3. Side-lying time (when baby is alert and directly supervised by an adult)

Place your baby on their LEFT side. You may need to support your baby with pillows or towel rolls behind their back. Repeat this activity placing your baby on their right side. When your baby is on their RIGHT side, use a small, folded towel under their head to keep it straight and in the middle.



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