

Congenital Muscular Torticollis - Left



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What Is Congenital Muscular Torticollis?

Congenital Muscular Torticollis is caused by a shortening of the muscles on one side of the neck. It typically causes:

- the head to tilt towards the shortened side
- the chin to tilt away from the shortened side.

Torticollis is a common condition usually discovered within the first few months of life. It may be associated with a harmless lump in the muscle which should disappear in a few months.

Why Does Torticollis Happen?

The precise cause of torticollis is unknown, although there are theories. It could be related to a difficult birth or the baby's position in the uterus before birth.

How Is Torticollis Treated?

There are several ways that torticollis can be treated. Your child's treatment will consist of a physiotherapy program which includes positioning and exercises. This will be reviewed monthly as your child progresses. Other possible treatments include:

- A special collar to help improve your child's head position. This is provided by an occupational therapist
- Surgery, rarely necessary, to lengthen the muscle

What Are the Results of Treatment?

If you follow a home program consistently, your child's condition usually improves over a few months. The time it takes is different for each child.

Treatment

The following instructions are for you to follow at home for your child's treatment:

Positioning:

- Turn your baby's head to her left when she is sleeping.
- Position your child so that toys and people are on her left side.
- Avoid long periods of time in car seats, baby seats, and swings where your child's head is in one position.
- Carry your child over your right shoulder so he turns his head to the left.



- If less than 4 months old, cradle your child on her left side with her head resting on your left elbow.



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- Hold your child facing you against your chest with his head held turned to the left. Hold this position as long as he will let you.

Playing:

- In all positions (on back, on tummy, or upright) practice having your child looking towards the left side. Encourage your child to look as far as possible over her left shoulder. It helps if the right shoulder is stabilized during this exercise.
- Tummy time is important. Place your child on her tummy at least four times a day when awake during playtime. Supervise at all times.
- At around 4 months old, strengthening exercises to correct a head tilt may be introduced.

Lean/tip your child to his left side. Allow your child to correct head position towards upright. Various positions can be used for this activity (carrying, sitting in your lap, on hands and knees, side-sitting, or lying on his left side).



Stretching Program

Why is stretching necessary?

- Daily stretches will gradually lengthen the short muscle. This makes it easier for your child to turn his head and keep his head straight.

Will the stretches hurt?

- Your child may feel the muscle stretch. Most children cry in protest, but settle quickly when cuddled after the stretches.

Home Stretching Program

These stretches must be performed ____ times daily, preferably before feeds. Begin with ____ and increase to ____ as directed by your physiotherapist.

Two Person Stretches:

First, position your child:

1. Place your child on her back on a padded table with her head off the edge.
2. One person holds your child's shoulders and collarbones firmly on the surface throughout the stretches.
3. The other person places his hands at the base of your child's skull as instructed. Avoid any pressure on the jaw. Ensure that you can see your child's face during the stretch.

First Stretch

1. Pull your child's head gently away from her shoulders, towards you.
2. Turn your child's head towards the left side, so he is looking at/over her left shoulder.
3. Hold for ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.

Left Torticollis



Allow your child to rest for a few seconds before starting the second stretch.

Second Stretch

1. Pull your child's head gently away from her shoulders, towards you.
2. Bend your child's head forward a little.
3. Turn your child's head to the left side a little.
4. Bend your child's head to bring the right ear in front of the right shoulder.
5. Hold for ____ seconds. Repeat ____ times.

One Person Stretches:

Left Torticollis



First Stretch

1. Position your child lying on his left side.
2. Holding your child's head in position, roll the right shoulder and trunk back so he is on his back with his head turned to the left side.
3. Hold for ____ seconds.

This stretch can also be done on his tummy, turning his head to the left side.

Second Stretch

1. Cradle your child with her head on your left forearm.
2. Raise her trunk and legs so that there is a stretch on the left side of the neck.



This stretch can also be done with your child lying on her left side on a padded surface. Stabilizing the right shoulder, lift your child's head until there is a stretch on the left side of the neck.

What Might Happen If The Torticollis Is Not Treated?

The muscle will remain short, making it difficult for your child to turn his head. The head will remain tilted to the side. This may result in flattening of skull and facial bones.

How Can our Family Help?

- Follow the home stretching exercise program
- Position the child correctly for sleep, play and carrying
- Keep physiotherapy appointments

Clinicians

PT _____
 phone 604-875-2123

OT _____
 phone 604-875-2122

Next appointment:

Please call if you are unable to attend your appointment.

It's good to ask!

Developed by the health care professionals of the Physiotherapy Department with assistance from the Department of Learning & Development