

Exercises: Left Torticollis Stretching and Positioning for Play

Left torticollis (tor-ti-COLL-iss) is a tightening of the muscles on the left side of the neck. It results in the child always bending his or her head to the left side. The child is not able to easily turn his head to his left. If this is not corrected, it can lead to changes in head shape, eating problems and uneven facial appearance (right and left sides of the face don't match). Torticollis can also affect the way a child plays, uses his hands, and explores his surroundings.

Doing these stretching exercises, carrying your child properly and correctly positioning the child for play can help to correct torticollis.

Stretching Exercises

The best place for stretching exercises is a changing table or a carpeted floor. Place your child on his back. If you are sitting on the floor, you can place your child in your lap, with the child on his back and knees tucked.

Side Bending

Hold your child's LEFT shoulder down with your RIGHT hand.

Place your LEFT hand on top of the LEFT side of your child's head. Slowly bend his RIGHT ear towards his RIGHT shoulder (Picture 1).

Hold this position for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.

Do this exercise _____ times a day.

Rotation (Head Turning)

Place your RIGHT hand on your child's RIGHT shoulder.

Cup your child's head with the LEFT hand (Picture 2).

Slowly turn your child's nose to his LEFT shoulder.

Hold this position for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times. Do this exercise _____ times a day.



Picture 1 Side bending.



Picture 2 Rotation (head turning).

Positioning for Play

Playing while lying on his side (side-lying): Position your child so that he can play while lying on his side (Picture 3). This position allows gravity to do some of the work of stretching the neck and bringing the hands to the middle of the body. Bringing hands to the middle is an important step for feeding, hand and eye coordination, and other areas of your child's development.

Playing on his stomach: When your child is awake, it is very important he be placed on his tummy for play (Picture 4). This helps her learn to control her head movements.

When your child is on his tummy on the floor, place all toys so he has to turn his face to the LEFT (Picture 5). You can help him turn his face to the left while he plays on his tummy.

Carrying Your Child

Hold the child facing away from you, in a side-lying position, with your child's LEFT ear resting against your LEFT forearm (Picture 6). Get your forearm between the child's ear and shoulder to help stretch the tight muscles. You can use your forearm to lift your child's head away from the shoulder to get a side-bending stretch. Place your RIGHT arm between your child's legs and support your child's body and grasp his left shoulder with your right hand.

Carry your child in this position as much as possible. You can use this position to stretch the tight muscles if your child doesn't tolerate the side-bending stretch well on his back.

Other Suggestions

1. Hold toys so that your child has to look up and out to his LEFT.
2. Position your child in the crib so that activities in the room encourage him to look LEFT.
3. While bottle-feeding your child, position him to face LEFT.



Picture 3 Side lying.



Picture 4 Tummy time, active play.



Picture 5 Tummy time, passive stretch.

Other Suggestions, continued

4. While holding your child across your shoulder, position him to face LEFT.
5. When not in the car, don't use the car seat as a place to put your child for playtime.
6. Your therapist can show you ways to use rolled-up baby blankets and towels to help keep your child's head in a neutral position.
7. Once your child is ready, your therapist can show you how to encourage him to actively move his head to strengthen and stretch the neck muscles.

If your child does not improve with these exercises, your doctor may order X-rays, an eye exam or other tests to check for fluid behind the eardrum.

If you have questions, be sure to ask _____
or call _____.



Picture 6 How to carry your child.