

## Exercises: Right Torticollis Stretching and Positioning for Play

Right torticollis (tor-ti-COLL-iss) is a tightening of the muscles on the right side of the neck. It results in your child always bending his or her head to the right side. The child is not able to easily turn his head to the right. 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 the child in your lap, with the child on his back and knees tucked.

#### Side Bending

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

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

Hold this position for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

Do this exercise \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

#### Rotation (Head Turning)

Place your **LEFT** hand on your child's **LEFT** shoulder. Cup your child's head with the **RIGHT** hand. Use your **LEFT** hand to hold your child's chin (Picture 2).

Slowly turn your child's nose to his **RIGHT** 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.



**Picture 3** Side lying.

**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 him learn to control his head movements.

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



**Picture 4** Tummy time, active play.

## Carrying Your Child

Hold the child facing away from you, in a side-lying position, with your child's **RIGHT** ear resting against your **RIGHT** 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 **LEFT** arm between your child's legs and support your child's body and grasp his right shoulder with your left 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.



**Picture 5** Tummy time, passive stretch.

## Other Suggestions

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

## Other Suggestions, continued

4. While holding your child across your shoulder, position him to face RIGHT.
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.