

Exercises: Left Torticollis 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 your child often bending his or her head to the left side and looking to the right side. Your child may not be able to easily turn his or her head to the left due to the muscle tightness. If this is not corrected, it can lead to continued muscle tightness, changes in head shape, and uneven facial appearance (right and left sides of the face do not match). Torticollis can also affect the way your child plays, uses his or her hands, and explores his or her surroundings.

Helping your child exercise, carrying the child properly, and putting him or her into the right position for play can help to correct torticollis. The earlier the exercises are started, the easier this condition is to correct. Physical therapy may be recommended to teach you specific stretching and strengthening exercises that you can do with your child.

Positioning for play

Playing on the stomach: When your child is awake, it is very important that he or she spends time on the tummy for play. When your child is **on his or her tummy on the floor**, place all toys so the child has to turn to face the **LEFT** (Picture 1). Always be sure someone is watching when your child is on his or her tummy.

Never place your child on the tummy to sleep.

Picture 1 Supervised tummy time, active play.



Carrying your child

Hold your child facing away from you, in a side-lying position, with the LEFT ear resting against your LEFT forearm (Picture 2).

Put your forearm between the child's ear and left 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 the child's legs to support the body. Grasp the left shoulder with your right hand.

Carry your child in this position as much as possible.



Picture 2 How to carry your child.

Other suggestions

1. Hold toys so that your child has to turn his or her head to the LEFT.
2. When playing, put toys and activities on your child's LEFT side to encourage him or her to turn the head to the LEFT.
3. While bottle-feeding your child, position the child to encourage him or her to turn the head to the LEFT.
4. When not in the car, do not use the car seat as a place to put your child for playtime or to sleep.

These exercises alone may not correct your child's torticollis. Your physician may also order physical therapy, x-rays, or an eye exam.

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