

Neck Tension in Baby (Torticollis)

Why does my baby have muscle tension in their neck?

When babies are in utero, they may be curled up in one position for a long time, which causes a shortening of the muscle that connects the collarbone to the skull on one side of their neck. When babies are born, they may still prefer the same head and neck position and your baby may look like their head is tilted to one side. This is called Infant Torticollis and it can affect the way your baby breastfeeds.

Why is it important to treat Torticollis?

If the muscles in your baby's body are tight then the muscles in their neck, around their mouth, and in their tongue are also tight. Breastfeeding can be hard for a baby with tight muscles. Sometimes even bottle feeding can be hard for them.

How do I know if my baby has Torticollis?

If a baby has torticollis they may:

- Have a preference for feeding on one breast
- Have a strong gag reflex or chomp at the breast when feeding
- Fall asleep with their head always turned to one side
- Be in the shape of a 'C' when laying on their back
- Look slightly asymmetrical. They may have one cheek fatter than the other, one eye larger than the other, or flat spots on the back or side of their head

How can I help my baby?

1. Stretching - Gentle stretching can help change your baby's neck and head position. We can show you how to do this at the clinic.
2. Tummy time - Babies need 20-30 minutes of supervised tummy time every day. You can use two or three short sessions throughout the day. Sometimes babies don't like tummy time but it's still an important exercise for them.
3. Let your baby move freely! Time on the floor, baby wearing and skin to skin can all help. Try to limit time in swaddles, swings, and other baby "containers". Use the car seat for the car but avoid using it for walks and sleeping.

Resources:

1. Stretching - Milestones Physical Therapy Services
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLkUehTXXEo&t=6s>
2. Positioning and tummy time - Milestones Physical Therapy Services
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8m2F-YhgMTksXg99oumAFA>
3. Some Infant Physiotherapists in Calgary: Calgary Youth Physiotherapy (North and South Locations), Lakeview Physiotherapy
4. Some Infant Osteopaths in Calgary: Antoine Michel (Ellipse Therapy NW), Abnoan Dos Santos (Body Therapy Wellness Centre NE)
5. Instagram: babybegin, littlemoverspt, milestones.and.motherhood

