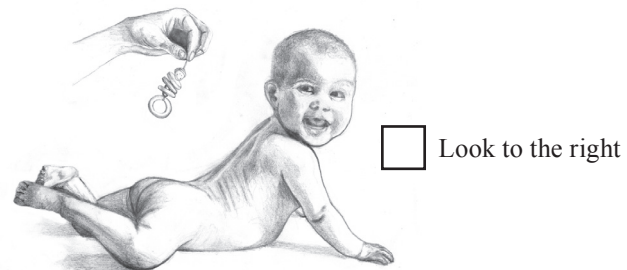
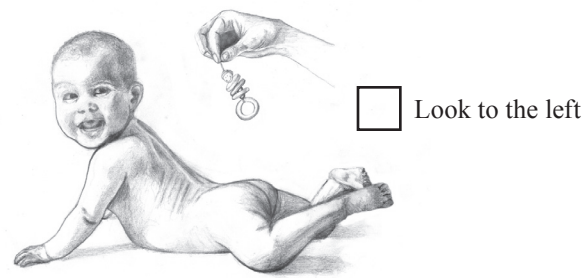


## Strengthening activities:

Activities that strengthen the neck muscles may help to reduce a baby's head tilt and generally improve the position of your baby's neck. The following are good activities to try with your baby:

- 1.** Encourage your baby to look to the \_\_\_\_\_ side when they are on their backs, on their tummy or sitting up. Use a favorite toy (something black and white works well with little babies), or your face to motivate them to look to the \_\_\_\_\_.



- 2.** Encourage tummy time. This position is very important for general strengthening of the muscles in the back of the neck and upper back. If your child does not like tummy time you can try putting a roll under their chest to help to prop them up. Another option is to have them on your chest while you are reclined for tummy time.



- 3.** If your child is over 4 months of age you can use the side carry position as shown below to help to strengthen the muscle on the opposite side of the neck.



☐ To strengthen left side of neck



☐ To strengthen right side of neck

## How long will I have to do these exercises?

This will depend on your child's age and the degree of tightness of their neck muscles. Your physiotherapist will check your child's neck movements every month. When you and the therapist are happy with the results, the therapist will tell you to stop doing the exercises.

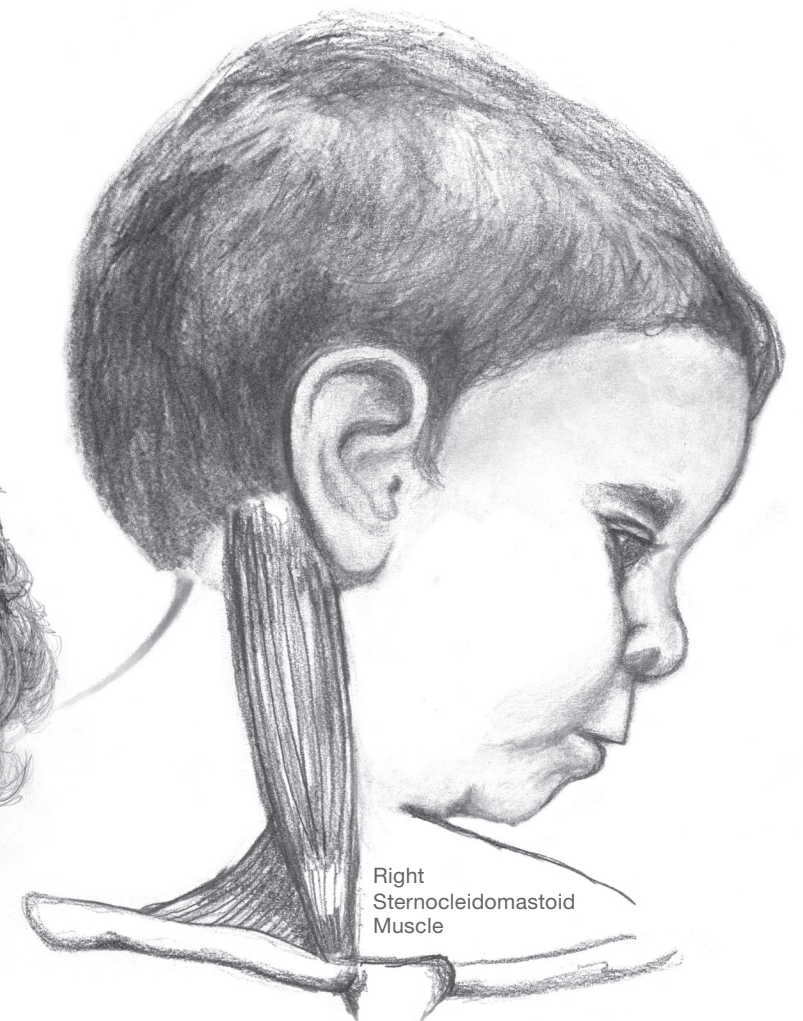


Prepared by Physiotherapy Services,  
Janeway Child Health and Rehabilitation Centre,  
Eastern Health  
Illustrated by Phil Simms

# Congenital Muscular Torticollis



Typical posture for a left torticollis



Right  
Sternocleidomastoid  
Muscle

## What is congenital muscular torticollis?

The term torticollis is derived from two Latin terms tortus meaning twisted and collum meaning neck. The word torticollis describes a condition in which there is an abnormal neck posture. The word congenital means the condition was present at birth.

The main reason for abnormal neck posture with torticollis is tightness in a muscle in the neck known as the sternocleidomastoid muscle. There are two of these muscles in the neck, one on either side. If one of these muscles is tight the baby's neck will be pulled toward that side of the neck and the chin will be turned away from that side.

## Should I be concerned about the lump on my baby's neck?

No. The lump that you may feel is scar tissue which is a normal result of healing. It is not believed to be painful for your baby. With stretching exercises this lump should go away.

**Your therapist may also show you gentle massage that may help.**

## What causes torticollis?

It is not known exactly what causes torticollis. There are two main theories of how torticollis happens:

- *The neck muscle was stretched during birth and healed with scar tissue. The scar tissue causes the muscle to become tight and short.*
- *The muscle is short because of the baby's position in the womb.*



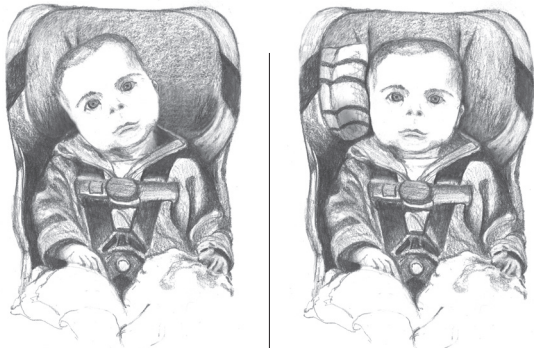
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Health

# What can I do to help my baby?

There are several activities and exercises that you can do to help your baby. Positioning your baby will encourage a straighter head position and may also help to prevent baby flat head.

If the neck muscles are tight specific stretching exercises will help to loosen the tight muscles. Certain activities may help to strengthen your baby’s neck.

## Positioning:



Before

After

- 1.** In the car seat use a rolled receiving blanket or a thick face cloth to keep the baby’s head straighter. You should never place anything behind the baby’s head or neck.

- 2.** During **supervised** sleep and play time you can ¼ turn your baby to the \_\_\_\_\_.

This will help to stretch the neck and will also avoid pressure on the \_\_\_\_\_ side of the baby’s skull for long periods. This will help prevent baby flat head or reduce flat head if it is already there.

**The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends that babies sleep on their back at night.**



☐ ¼ Right

☐ ¼ Left



- 3.** You should place your child on their tummy for play 4 - 6 times throughout the day. You should always supervise your child during tummy time. If your baby does not tolerate tummy time you can try using a roll under their chest to help prop them up. Try to keep your baby on their tummy for 3 – 5 minutes to start and gradually increase the time up to 15 minutes.

## Stretching:

Stretching exercises will be shown to you by a physiotherapist. The physiotherapist will make sure that you know how to do them safely and effectively.

**Note:** If your baby does not tolerate these stretches you can also use the side carrying position to stretch the neck.

- If your baby is very fussy you should stop and calm the child before continuing with the exercises.
- These stretching exercises should be done 3 – 5 times throughout the day.
- Hold each stretch for 5 – 10 seconds and repeat 3 – 5 times.
- Perform exercises on a firm surface and the movements should be gentle and smooth.
- Talk, play music or sing to your child while doing the exercises.
- You can use a warm face cloth on the tight side of the neck to warm it up before stretching the neck.

### Neck: Lateral Tilt

- Place child flat on floor. Hold opposite shoulder firmly.
- Using fingertip control, slowly and gently tilt Right/Left ear toward shoulder.
- Do not lifthead off floor.



☐ Right Tilt



☐ Left Tilt

### Neck: Rotation

- Place child flat on floor.
- Place hand on head to gently turn chin to Right/ Left shoulder. Hold opposite shoulder firmly.
- Be sure not to push on jaw. Keep pressure on baby’s cheekbone.



☐ Right Rotation



☐ Left Rotation