

Neck exercises for your baby (infant torticollis)

Paediatric Physiotherapy

Information for Patients and Carers

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Introduction

Infant torticollis means ‘tilted neck’. One of the muscles (sternocleidomastoid muscle) in your baby’s neck is short or tight. This is the muscle at the side of your neck. It stands out when you turn your head. The tight muscle can cause your baby’s head to be tilted to the tight side and turned to the other side. Sometimes you can feel a lump in the muscle. This will slowly disappear by the age of 6 months.

It is important to carry out the following programme of stretching, playing and positioning with your baby during this time. It will prevent the baby’s head from becoming fixed in the wrong position. If during the exercises your baby is coughing or their face changes colour, stop the treatment and talk to your physiotherapist.

Carry out the following neck stretches with your baby after each daytime nappy change.

Neck stretches

1. Lay your baby on their back, either on your lap or on the floor.
Turn their head towards the and hold for 10 seconds.
Release and repeat 3 times.



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2. Put one hand on your baby's shoulder, and with the other hand tilt their head to the taking the ear to the shoulder.

Do not force the baby's head but let your baby ease into the movement gently.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Release and repeat 3 times.



General exercises

- Encourage your baby to turn their head to the side by talking and playing with them on this side.
- Carry your baby on your side to encourage them to look to the
- Lying your baby on their side will encourage movement and general development.
- In the cot, lay your baby down so they turn to the to see toys or watch you approach.
- When feeding your baby, sit to their side.

Contact details

If you have any problems with the exercises please call the Physiotherapy Department on 0116 258 5816, or talk about the problem with your physiotherapist at your next appointment.

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