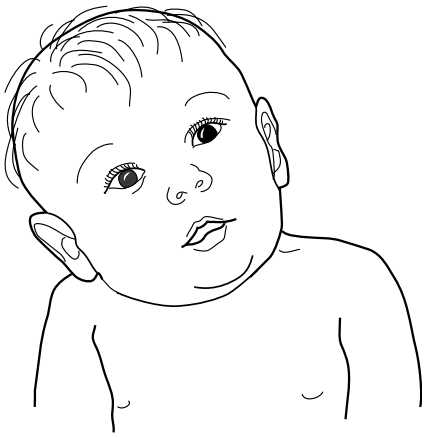
Let's Talk About...

Torticollis and Plagiocephaly



Congenital (kun-GEN-it-al) Muscular Torticollis (tor–tih-KOHL-iss) is a condition in which a child's head is tilted to one side and turned toward the opposite side. It is caused by having tight muscles on one side of the neck and weak muscles on the other side of the neck.

Plagiocephaly (play-jee-o-SEF-al-lee) is a condition in which a child's head is not shaped correctly. You may notice these things:

- Flattening of the back or side of the head
- Bulging of the forehead and cheek on one side
- One eye looking larger than the other
- A pushed forward ear on the flattened side
- Tilted jaw

What can be done for torticollis and plagiocephaly?

It can be very helpful for children with torticollis or plagiocephaly to have physical therapy treatment. The earlier in life that they are treated, the fewer long-term effects. Therapy can correct or prevent problems of the head, neck, and face. It can also correct or prevent:

- Curving of the spine
- Poor hand/eye coordination
- Abnormal head shape
- Problems with balance

What will happen during therapy?

The therapist will assess your child and teach you how to:

- Stretch tight muscles
- Strengthen weak muscles
- Play with your baby to develop good coordination of the hands
- Play with your baby to develop motor skills
- Place your baby in positions to help shape the head

Your therapist will design a home exercise program to meet your child's needs.

Try to work therapy into playtime, bath time, diaper changes, feeding, and carrying. Teach therapy activities to your family and other caregivers. Make the therapy activities part of your child's routine. Take time to play with your child as you perform the activities. She will enjoy the one-on-one time you spend together. Remember: You should do all therapy activities gradually and with gentleness. Do not move your child's head forcefully. If needed, the therapist will refer your child to have a cranial remolding helmet to reshape her head.

Early awareness of torticollis and plagicephaly is very important. Appropriate therapy can correct or greatly improve both of these conditions.

Who do I call if I have questions?

If you think your child may have a torticollis or plagiocephaly, discuss this with your primary care

doctor. You can also call for an appointment at one of Intermountain Pediatric Outpatient Rehabilitation sites:

Cache Kids Pediatric Rehab
435.716.6440

Cassia Regional Medical Center
208.677.6530

Dixie Regional Medical Center
435.251.2250

Orem Community Hospital Pediatric
801.714.3505

PCMC Rehab Bountiful
801.292.8665

PCMC Rehab Ogden
801.387.2080

PCMC Rehab Sandy
801.571.3081

PCMC Rehab Taylorsville
801.840.4360

Intermountain
Primary Children's
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Pediatric Education Services
801.662.3500 Rev. 09/09

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