

Exercises for Torticollis

Torticollis is a congenital condition of limited range of motion in the neck. The child will usually hold his/her head tilted to one side and turned to another side. It is caused by the shortening of the sternocleidomastoid muscle.

A firm, non-tender mass may be felt within the muscle, which usually reduces in size and eventually disappears with treatment.

This condition can be treated with gentle stretching exercises if done regularly.

Possible resting position of baby with (L) torticollis



Stretching exercises

- 1) Turning to (L)
 - a. On bed

- Gently turn your child's head such that the chin reaches the (L) shoulder, making sure that both shoulders are held down.
- Hold the stretch for 20 seconds, and repeat 5 – 10 times.



- 2) Tilting to (R)
 - a. On bed

- Gently pull the (R) ear towards the (R) shoulder, ensuring that the (L) shoulder is held down.
- Hold the stretch for 20 seconds, and repeat the stretch 5 – 10 times.



b. When carried

- Carry your child in your arms with his/her back to you and his/her head on your (L) arm.
- Hold this position for a few minutes.



Positioning

1) On bed

a. On tummy

- Allow your child to lie face down with his/her head turned, looking towards the (L) side.
- Allow your child to lie in this position for about 15 minutes or for as long as your child can tolerate.
- Ensure that the mattress is not soft and that there is no pillows or loose bedding under your child's face.



b. On (L) side lying

- Allow your child to lie facing the (L) side.
- Fold towel to about the distance between your child's ear and shoulder and put it under his/her left ear.
- Ensure that your child is well-supported so that he/she will not turn over.



c. On (R) side lying

- Allow your child to lie facing the (R) side.
- **Do not** use towel under his right ear.
- Ensure that your child is well-supported so that he/she will not turn over.



d. On back/In pram

- Place rolled towels under your child's head to support it in neutral position.
- Make a bigger roll on the (R) as compared to the (L).



2) While breastfeeding

a. At (L) breast

- Turning to (L)
 - Football hold
 - Hold your child on the (L) side of your body, with his/her head turned to the (L).



b. At (R) breast

- Turning to (L)
 - Cradle hold
 - Hold your child with his/her body facing the ceiling and his/her head turned to the (L).



- Tilting to (R)
 - Cradle hold
 - Hold your child with his/her body facing you and his/her head tilted to the (R).



Note: Do not do these stretches and put your child in these positions when he/she is in distress. Try not to do the exercises immediately after feeds. Allow about an hour after feeds before commencing the stretches and positioning.

This information serves as a guideline. For individualised modifications, please approach your physiotherapist.

Rehabilitation Centre — Physiotherapy
National University Hospital
5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074
Tel: 6779 5555
Website: www.nuh.com.sg

The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions. Information is correct at time of printing (November 2020) and subject to revision without prior notice.