

## 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 (R) torticollis



### Stretching exercises

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

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



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

- Gently pull the (L) ear towards the (L) shoulder, ensuring that the (R) 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 (R) 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 (R) 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 (R) side lying

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



c. On (L) side lying

- Allow your child to lie facing the (L) side.
- **Do not** use towel under his left 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 (L) as compared to the (R).



## 2) While breastfeeding

### a. At (R) breast

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



### b. At (L) breast

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



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



**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.

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