



What is Torticollis ?

Torticollis is the tilt and/or rotation of the head because of muscle tightness or muscle weakness. It affects infants and is generally diagnosed within the first 2 months of life. Torticollis is most often caused by sleeping or remaining in one position for a prolonged period of time. It can also be caused by the infant's position in utero, birth trauma, or a visual impairment.

Torticollis may lead to additional problems, such as:

- Flattening of the skull (plagiocephaly) in infants, movement that favors one side of the body, affecting the arms, trunk, and hips. This can lead to strength imbalances that negatively can affect gross motor skill development
- Scoliosis
- Limited ability to turn the head to see, hear, and interact with surroundings, which can lead to delayed cognitive development
- Delayed body awareness or lack of self-awareness and interaction
- Difficulty with balance

Signs and Symptoms

A child or infant may keep the head tilted and/or rotated toward one side of the body. For example, if the muscle on the left side of the neck is shortened, weak, or in spasm—the head may tilt toward the left shoulder and rotate toward the right. There may be tightness in the neck or a noticeable lump in the neck muscle. Pain may or may not be present, depending on the type of torticollis.

How is it Diagnosed?

Torticollis is often diagnosed by physicians. Experienced pediatric physical therapists may diagnose the need for treatment of congenital muscular torticollis and positional torticollis.

Once the type of torticollis is determined, your physical therapist may provide treatment. In most cases, torticollis is a muscular problem, and physical therapists are musculoskeletal experts.

How Can a Physical Therapist Help?

Physical therapy is the primary treatment for torticollis. Physical therapists provide treatment to address the impairments that are causing the torticollis as well as address any impairments that are caused by the torticollis. Early treatment results in the best outcomes.

The physical therapist will work with a child's caregiver to develop and reach mutual goals. This may include an individualized treatment plan to:

- Strengthen neck muscles
- Correct muscle imbalances
- Gain pain-free movement (range of motion)
- Improve postural control and symmetry
- Improve the body's alignment by easing muscle tension

These goals may be achieved through stretching, strengthening, massage, positioning, and a home exercise program. If not treated, torticollis can become a permanent condition.

What Kind of Physical Therapist Do I Need?

All physical therapists are prepared through education and experience to treat a variety of conditions, including torticollis. However, you should consider a pediatric physical therapist who is experienced in treating infants/children with torticollis

All of the physical therapists at Kids Can Do, Inc. have attended continuing education courses in treating infants with torticollis and have over 25 years of combined clinical experience in the field of pediatrics.

Please call Kids Can Do, Inc if you are interested in setting up an evaluation for your infant/ child or would like to bring your infant/ child in for a free screening.

Information from: www.moveforwardpt.com

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