

Plagiocephaly and Torticollis

You have been referred to physiotherapy for plagiocephaly or torticollis and you may be wondering what does this mean and what can you expect for your upcoming appointment? This handout can help to introduce you to these conditions and help you with some positioning strategies that are beneficial to all babies!

What is Plagiocephaly?

Plagiocephaly means there is a flattening of the left, right, or central part of the back of a baby's head. This has become a common condition since the "Back to Sleep" campaign to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). It is important to know that plagiocephaly only affects the baby's appearance and has no impact on brain development.



Example of a left plagiocephaly

Photo Credit: ankleandfootcentre.com.au

What is Torticollis?

Torticollis is when a muscle on one side of a baby's neck is tighter than the other side. This often presents as a baby who prefers to look to only one side and/or their head may appear tilted. This is commonly seen with plagiocephaly because if a baby is only looking to one side, a flatness can develop on that same side as a baby's skull is soft as it grows rapidly.



Example of a torticollis

Photo Credit: blueberrytherapy.ca



Photo Credit: healthtimes.com.au



Photo Credit: canberrachildrensphysio.com.au

What Can You Expect At Your First Visit?

- 1) Meet your clinician(s) including a physiotherapist and physiotherapy assistant
- 2) Have a conversation around your pregnancy and birth history, any concerns you may have, and be asked developmental screening questions
- 3) A physical exam including looking at your baby's head, neck, and their gross motor skills
- 4) Discuss treatment options and make a care plan if future follow up visits are recommended
- 5) Review information and exercises individualized to you and your baby to do at home.

We encourage you to bring any questions or concerns with you to your initial appointment!

What Can You Do While You Wait For Your First Appointment?

Back to Sleep & Tummy to Play






Tummy Time



Photo Credits: strong4life.com; napacenter.org

It is recommended to start tummy time right from day one! Always practice tummy time while your baby is awake and supervised. Even trying this position for a few moments at a time can help your baby get comfortable on their tummy and work on building up their strength.

Many babies do find tummy time difficult, and they often let their caregivers know this – here are some strategies to help make tummy time more enjoyable for both you and your baby:

-  Try on your chest and gradually lean further back as they get stronger
-  Face to face on the floor – sing songs, play peek-a-boo
-  Roll a towel under their chest to help prop them up
-  Place brightly coloured toys or a mirror in front of them
-  Try doing a couple minutes of tummy time after each diaper change

Encourage to Look Both Ways

Try placing toys, people, lights, or mirrors on alternating sides so your baby is motivated to look both ways.

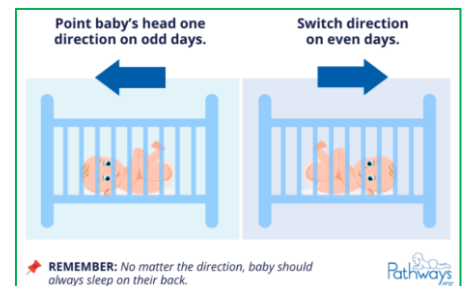
Try changing your baby's position in the crib so they will turn their head both directions while sleeping.



Photo Credit: nfanclub.com



Photo Credit: crmoms.com



Change Play Positions Often

As per the Canadian Pediatric Society, it is recommended that babies engage in active floor play several times throughout the day and avoiding staying in the same position for prolonged periods. Practice sitting, rolling, side-lying and of course... tummy time!

Resource: cps.ca

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