

Activities for children or babies with torticollis

Information for parents from the Paediatric Orthopaedic Service

Your child has been diagnosed with **torticollis**. This is a condition where the muscles in your child's neck have developed a problem and they cannot move their neck properly; they always seem to have a stiff neck. At your appointment today, your physiotherapist has suggested some exercises that may help.

If you have any concerns or questions about the following exercises, please speak to your physiotherapist.

- Please only practice those exercises highlighted by your physiotherapist. Some of these exercises may not be appropriate for your child.
- Your physiotherapist will go through each of these exercises in the clinic, showing you how they are to be done. If you have any questions, please speak to your physiotherapist.
- Please practice the following exercises every day, unless told otherwise by your physiotherapist.
- Do each exercise as often as possible for about 5 to 10 minutes, three to five times a day.
- **Babies only:** encourage lots of supervised 'tummy-time'.
- Do each exercise slowly and gently.
- These exercises should not hurt your child. If they show distress, please stop and try again later that day.
- Remember each child is different and will develop and improve in their own time.
- If your child is wearing a plastercast, it is important that they take their weight on the cast for the exercise to be effective.
- If you have any further questions regarding these exercises, please contact the Physiotherapy Department on email ekh-tr.paedmsk@nhs.net



Exercises for children with torticollis



Encourage your child to turn their head from side to side

- Use toys to encourage your baby to look to the opposite side. For example if your child tends to look to the right all the time, place all their toys on their left hand side.
- With a younger baby, you can use the 'rooting reflex'. This is where they turn to the side if you stroke the corner of their mouth.



Adding a little stretch (side flexion)

- Lay your baby on their back, and encourage them to tilt their head to the side to gently stretch tight muscles.
- Make sure to hold your baby's shoulder when doing this (see photo).
- Release their head if they start to resist you.



Adding a little stretch (rotation)

- When your baby is on their back, encourage them to look to the opposite side. Then gently use your hand as shown to give them a little more movement.
- Make sure to gently hold down your baby's shoulder. For example, if their head is facing left, hold down their right shoulder.
- Release their head if they start to resist you.



Lying on their side

- Place your baby on their right side, so that they can see their toys (see photo). This also helps your baby to bring both their hands to the centre of their body.
- Place a blanket/towel behind their back, so they feel secure.
- You can also place a towel between their knees.



Lying on your lap

- Place your baby on your lap (as shown). Raise your left leg to encourage them to look to their right.
- Repeat with your right leg.



Adding a little stretch

- With your baby laying on their back, encourage them to look left. Gently use your hand (as shown) to give a little more movement.
- Make sure to gently hold down your baby's right shoulder.
- Release their head if they start to resist you.



Cheek down first

- When laying your baby down, place them on their side.
- Roll them on to their back, but try to keep their cheek touching the mat (see photo).



From lying into sitting

- When picking your baby up, first roll them on to their side and get them to lift their head up and push with their arm.
- The aim of this is to strengthen their neck muscle on the opposite side to affected muscle.



Using a mirror

- Stand or sit down facing a mirror, holding your baby as shown.
- Tilt your baby slowly to the left, so that they have to bend their head to the right, to try and get their eyes level.



'Peek-a-boo'

- If you have an older baby, that is able to sit without support, put them on your lap, holding their body still, and play 'peek-a-boo' to get them to look over their left shoulder.
- Or get their attention and then turn their body to the right.



Side sitting

- Place your baby in a side sitting position, with their weight on their right or left arm or elbow and their feet to their right or left.
- Encourage your baby to reach for toys with their free arm. Put your hand on their supporting arm and your other hand on their opposite hip. This will help them to lift their head to the centre of their body (see photo).



Row, row the boat

- Place your child on your lap and encourage gentle movement forwards and backwards.
- You can sing Row, Row, Row Your Boat or another favourite song as you do this.
- Experiment with moving fast and slow.

Please remember

- These exercises should not hurt your child. If they show distress, please stop and try again later that day.
- Every child is different, and will progress at their own speed.
- If you have any concerns about your child's condition or their progress, please contact your GP.
- If you have any questions about any of these exercises, please speak to your physiotherapist.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhft.nhs.uk/patientinformation