

## **Torticollis Handout**

### **Why does my baby have muscle tension in their neck?**

When babies are in utero, they may be curled up in one position for a long time, which causes a shortening of the muscle that connects the collarbone to the skull on one side of their neck. When babies are born, they may still prefer the same head and neck position and your baby may look like their head is tilted to one side. This is called Infant Torticollis and it can affect the way your baby breastfeeds. It can also make baby prefer to sleep with their head only facing one direction, and this can lead to a flat spot developing.

### **Why is it important to treat Torticollis?**

If the muscles in your baby's body are tight then the muscles in their neck, around their mouth and in their tongue are also tight. Breastfeeding can be hard for a baby with tight muscles. It can also impact their development in terms of rolling and crawling.

### **How do I know if my baby has Torticollis?**

If a baby has torticollis they may:

- Have a preference for feeding on one breast
- Have a strong gag reflex or chomp at the breast when feeding.
- Fall asleep with their head always turned to one side.
- Be in the shape of a 'C' when laying on their back.
- Look slightly asymmetrical. They may have one cheek fatter than the other, one eye larger than the other, or flat spots on the back or side of their head.

### **How can I help my baby?**

1. Stretching – Gentle stretching can help change your baby's neck and head position. These handouts from Children's Hospital of Ontario explain well how to do this.

Right Sided Tightness <https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/resources/P5611E.pdf>

Left Sided Tightness <https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/resources/P5559E.pdf>

2. Tummy time – Babies need 20-30 minutes of supervised tummy time every day. (You can use two short sessions throughout the day.) Sometimes babies don't like tummy time but it's still an important exercise for them.

3. Let your baby move freely! Time on the floor, baby wearing and skin to skin can all help. Try to limit the time spent in swaddles, swings and other baby "containers". Use the car seat for the car but avoid using it for walks and sleeping.

4. Take baby to an experienced child physiotherapist at:
  - Calgary Youth Physiotherapy (North and South Locations)
  - Lakeview Physiotherapy
  - Peak Health Kids