

## What is the problem?

Positional Plagiocephaly (Flat Head Syndrome) and Torticollis (stiff neck to one side) have become more common and persistent since the back-to-sleep campaign - advice given to reduce the incidence of sudden infant death.

Baby's head may have been positioned one way in-utero and is born with the asymmetry or the soft newborn head may get misshaped under the influence of its own weight.

Watch the way your baby sleeps, feeds and positions its head. Does he turn his head equally in both directions? When baby can only turn his head one way development may be one-sided. This can affect many things including sleeping, feeding, ears, eyes, teeth, muscle tone, appearance, and more.

**PREVENTION:** Start immediately after birth to avoid and to correct the problem. See a Cranial Osteopath for diagnosis, advice and if needed, treatment.



## Re-positioning

Begin re-positioning with special attention to the head - help your baby to alternate his head position from left to right. If there is no asymmetry, alternate equally.

## Sleeping

Re-position the head away from the flattened side once baby is in a deep sleep. Some babies will not settle with their heads turned one way. Seek professional help – see below. Even young babies turn towards a light source so alternate the position of the baby in the cot or the cot in the room.

If you are not sure what action to take, please call us and ask to speak to an osteopath

## Carrying & Handling

Position baby to face the side they least prefer:

- o Playtime
- o Nappy changing
- o Bottle feeding and weaning – attract with food
- o Carry on the appropriate side for the desired direction of head turning

**Reduce time spent in car seats** and lying on the back of the head on hard flat surfaces. Use a baby sling and alternate head position

## Tummy Time

### Back to Sleep – Front to Play

Supervised Tummy Time is safe, no matter how young the baby. It helps baby learn to push up, roll, sit up, crawl and pull to stand.

Start from birth with baby on your tummy. Increase the time a little each day. If your baby fusses and cries try these ideas:

- o Lie them on your chest whilst you watch TV or across your knees with toys on the floor
- o Lying back with your knees bent up, lie them on your knees
- o Undress them on their tummy
- o Lie with them on the floor & get siblings to help
- o Provide entertainment – a board book propped up, toys, mirrors, lights
- o Take baby's socks off to help them get traction on the mat
- o When baby has some head control at 3-4 months play superman. If they can't get up onto forearms use a rolled up towel or pillow for support under the chest and arms with his arms in front of it
- o Make sure he isn't hungry or tired and don't do after a feed when his stomach is full
- o Try massaging your baby on his tummy
- o A little & often works best - when you're sure he's had enough give him a cuddle and try again later

## Active Neck Stretches

Encourage symmetrical movement through play. Position toys, TV, a remote car or train and make noises or sing to the difficult side.

Remember the most attractive thing for baby to look at is YOU! Spend lots of time playing with your baby in positions where you can encourage movement to the desired side.

A modified hug against you by stabilising the shoulders with one hand, supporting baby's head with your other hand.

The osteopath may show you how to exercise baby's head after every nappy change as they lie on their changing mat. The shoulders must be stabilised and the head turned whilst amusing baby with a song or funny faces. Also side-lying exercises. This may be moving baby from sitting to lying towards the side of the tightness, or moving the body on the stabilised head.

Side-bending gently to one side can produce a gentle stretch. Some of these exercises work well on a gym ball or in the water.

After birth, the body tissues grow and develop rapidly, week by week, so the sooner the baby is seen the quicker the problem will resolve, and with fewer treatments.

## Common problems Mother

Backache, sciatica, abdominal pain  
Pelvic instability, carpal tunnel syndrome  
Blood pressure, short of breath, general malaise  
Neck & shoulder pain, Headaches  
Digestive problems (acidity/heartburn)  
Old & new scars (from infections or surgery)  
Constipation, piles, varicose veins  
Can't get comfortable nursing & carrying baby  
Pelvic floor/abdominal weakness/instability  
Menstrual pain and irregularity

## Common problems Baby

Difficult, long or fast labour  
Mishapen head  
Asymmetry of the face, body or limbs  
Poor head movement  
Floppy or tight baby  
Unsettled baby  
Talipes, Palsies, Squint  
Sticky eye  
Downs Syndrome  
Cleft lip/palate  
Snuffles and congestion  
Nasal and ear infections  
Failure to thrive  
Feeding difficulties  
Colic, Constipation  
Accidents, falls, knocks  
Reactions to immunisation  
Premature infants, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy

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# Positional Plagiocephaly (Flat-Head Syndrome) & Torticollis Re-positioning Advice



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