



Patient education: Torticollis in children

What is torticollis?— medical term for a twisted neck. The condition is sometimes called "wry neck." In torticollis, the head tilts to one side and the chin points in the opposite side. In babies born with torticollis, symptoms usually show up by 2-4 weeks after birth.

Torticollis is common in children, and babies can have it at birth. The medical term for this is "congenital torticollis." The word "congenital" means a condition a person is born with. Doctors do not know the exact cause of congenital torticollis, but it can run in families.

What are the symptoms of torticollis?—The symptoms of congenital torticollis can include.

- Head tilted to one side.
- Chin pointed to the opposite side from the head tilt. For example, if a baby's head tilts to the right, the chin points to the left.
- Lump on the side of the neck that the head tilts toward. For example, if a baby's head tilts to the right, the lump is on the right side of the neck.
- Lump on the side of the neck that the head tilts toward. For example, if a baby's head tilts to the right, the lump is on the right side of the neck.
- Face that looks uneven, with one side that does not match the other

Will my child need tests?—Maybe. The provider should be able to tell if your child has torticollis by doing an exam. Torticollis is usually diagnosed based on the physical examination findings in the office and imaging is rarely ordered.

How is torticollis treated?—Congenital torticollis sometimes goes away without treatment, but not always. If congenital torticollis is not treated, it can make one side of a child's face look different from the other side.

Treatments for congenital torticollis can include:

- Stretches and position changes you do with your baby at home
- Physical therapy
- Corrective devices such as a helmet
- Surgery if stretching and physical therapy do not work

If a child's neck is twisted in an accident, he or she needs treatment right away. Call an ambulance (9-1-1) and do not move child.

All Information on this handout was obtained from UpToDate.