

What is torticollis?

If your baby has torticollis, it means his or her neck is twisted with the head tipped one way and the chin turned in the other direction. Though it sounds very serious, usually this condition is caused by tightening of the sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscle in your baby's neck. It can typically be treated through simple at-home activities and physical therapy.

What is plagiocephaly?

Plagiocephaly is a condition in which a baby's soft skull becomes flattened in one area due to repeated pressure on that side of the head. If your baby has torticollis, he or she may also have plagiocephaly. Sometimes, plagiocephaly can also develop before birth because of the baby's position in the uterus or develop as a result of spending long periods of time on his or her back with the head in one position. Because premature babies have softer skull bones, they are more at risk for developing plagiocephaly.

Some cases of plagiocephaly can be treated by simply changing your baby's sleep position or having the baby spend more time on his or her tummy while awake. In other cases, your baby may need to wear a special band or helmet.

Need an appointment?

Schedule a visit with an Ochsner physician by calling **866.OCHSNER (866.624.7637)**.

For Therapy & Wellness appointments, call **504.842.4348**.

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Therapy & Wellness for Children – Metairie
3211 North Causeway Blvd.
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We accept private, Medicaid and most major insurance plans.

OCHSNER TORTICOLLIS AND PLAGIOCEPHALY THERAPY

Improve Your Child's Head and Neck Development.



Trust Ochsner Therapy & Wellness to improve your child's head and neck development through Pediatric Physical Therapy and helpful tips you can follow at home. Our highly skilled therapists will identify the causes of your child's torticollis and/or plagiocephaly and tailor treatment to fit his or her needs.



Our physical therapists can:

- Assess the extent of your baby's condition, taking into consideration his or her age, overall health and medical history.
- Discuss treatment options based on your preference and your baby's tolerance for specific procedures and therapies.
- Outline expectations for the course of your child's condition.
- Develop and teach you a gentle stretching exercise program for your baby that can help relieve muscle tension and strengthen the SCM muscle.
- Stimulate your baby's muscle to help him or her learn how to move and stretch it.
- Advise if you should explore surgical treatment options for torticollis.
- Recommend special band or helmet therapy, if needed, through which gentle pressure helps to reshape the head.

Your baby's therapists can also offer guidance for treating torticollis and plagiocephaly at home, including tummy time.

"Tummy time" is when your infant lays on his or her stomach while supervised. This exercise builds strength in the baby's neck, shoulders and chest; encourages movement of the head and eyes as the baby tries to see people and objects; and takes pressure off the skull. It is important to have supervised tummy time each day in order to:

- Prevent or correct flat spots on the back or side of your baby's head (plagiocephaly)
- Promote muscle development
- Prevent or correct tight neck muscles (torticollis)
- Promote growth and development
- Spend time bonding with your baby

Other tips:

- Carry your baby over your shoulder. By changing the shoulder each time, you will encourage your baby to turn his or her head to both sides.
- Alternate the position of your baby on the changing table. Roll your baby from side to side as you fasten diaper tabs. Talk to your baby from different sides as you change his or her diaper.
- Place fun toys or mobiles on both sides to encourage your baby to turn in each direction while on his or her tummy or back.
- Position your baby on his or her back to sleep, but turn the baby's head to the opposite side each night to prevent flat spots from developing. Keep a calendar by the crib as a reminder.

