

## Exercises: Left torticollis/right rotation preference

- Left torticollis is a tightening of the muscles on the LEFT side of the neck
- Tight neck muscles or a strong head preference to one side may be due to a shortened neck muscle, molding from being in the womb or environmental factors
- This means the baby is not able to easily turn their head to the left which may lead to changes in head shape and an uneven facial appearance. In the long term it may also effect feeding, playing and development
- Babies treated early with physiotherapy programmes usually respond well to treatment. Treatment involves stretches and positioning.

### Stretching Exercises

The best place for stretching exercises is a changing table or on a play mat on the floor. Place your child on their back. Do stretches when the child is relaxed and settled.

#### Side Flexion



Hold your child's **left** shoulder down with your **right** hand. Place your **left** hand on top of the **left** side of the child's head and slowly move their right ear towards their right shoulder.

Hold stretch for 15-20 seconds, repeat 2-3 times regularly throughout the day.

#### Side Flexion in Carrying



Hold your child facing away from you, in a side-lying position. The child's left ear should be resting against your left forearm. Place your forearm between the child's ear and shoulder and slowly move their right ear towards their right shoulder to help stretch the tight muscles. Place your right arm between the child's legs and support their body.

#### Rotation (Head turning)



Encourage your baby to look to the **left** side when lying on their back or in **left** side lying. Use toys and lights to attract their attention. Stabilise their right shoulder with your right hand and gently keep them looking to the **left** side using gentle pressure from your left hand. Try to gently move their head to encourage it to turn further to the left but do not force into any movement.

Hold for 15-20 seconds, repeat 2-3 times, regularly throughout the day.



## Rotation (in up-right position)



Hold your baby so they are facing outwards either when you are standing or have them sitting on your lap. Encourage your baby to look to the **left** side with toys and lights to attract their attention. Keep their body facing forwards, stabilising it against yours using your left hand and keep their head turned to the **right**, gently encouraging a stretch using your right hand. Hold for 15-20 seconds, Repeat 2-3 times, regularly throughout the day.

## Positions for play

The following positions are beneficial for normal development and help to strengthen your baby's shoulders, back and core. They will encourage your baby to actively move their head and neck.



## Tummy time



When the child is on their tummy, position all of their toys so that they have to turn their head to the **left**. Start with 30 seconds once every hour, gradually increasing this as tolerated.

Try applying some gentle overpressure by placing your hand on their hips and bottom which will make it easier for your baby to lift and use their head.

You can position your baby's head to the **left** side when they are relaxed. Never leave your baby unattended in this position and always place them on their back for sleeping.



## Side- Lying



Position your baby to play while lying on their **left** side. This position allows gravity to do some of the work of stretching the neck and bringing the hands to the middle of the body. Bringing hands to midline is an important step for feeding, hand and eye coordination, and other areas of your child's development.

## Other Suggestions

1. While sleeping position them so their head is turned to the **left**.
2. Position your child so that activities in the room encourage them to look to the **left**.
3. While feeding, try position your child to face the **left**.
4. While holding your child across your shoulder, position them to face to the **left**.
5. Try and avoid using a car seat, except when travelling/in a car.
6. Your therapist can show you ways to use rolled-up baby blankets and towels to help keep your child's head in a neutral position.

