

Emergency Department

Torticollis Advice Leaflet

Information for Parents and Families

What Is Torticollis?

Torticollis is the 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 direction. Torticollis can be caused by another medical condition, a muscle strain, bad reaction to medicine, or a problem with the spine that makes the neck twist. While uncomfortable, torticollis is usually nothing to worry about. Most kids feel better in about a week with some rest and relaxation.

What Causes Torticollis?

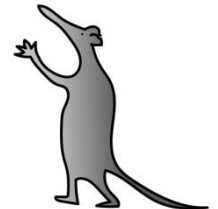
Many kids complain of neck pain after things like sleepovers or naps on the couch. That's because when we sleep in a new or uncomfortable position, the muscles and ligaments of the neck or spine can shift, causing painful pulled muscles or loosened ligaments.

Some kids also get torticollis when they have colds or throat infections due to painful swollen neck glands but anything else that affects or irritates the neck also can make muscles tense up.

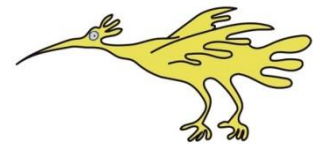
What Are the Symptoms of Torticollis?

Symptoms can include:

- Pain
- Trouble moving the head, neck, or both
- **If your child is being sick, looking pale, being irritable or sleepy, and being less coordinated than normal, you must come back the Emergency department straight away**



How Is Torticollis Treated?



Torticollis usually goes away on its own. After a day of rest, a child's neck pain and head tilt should begin to go away but might not be completely gone for up to 7-10 days.

During recovery, limit any activity that causes your child to turn the head or further strain the neck. To help your child feel better:

- Offer pain medicines like paracetamol or ibuprofen, these can help heal the muscle as well as stop the pain.
- Use warm compresses over the part of the neck that hurts when moved for a maximum of 20 minutes at a time, every 3–4 hours. (Never apply heat packs directly to the skin, instead keep a towel or cloth between the heat and the skin.)

- Check your child's bed if they first complained of torticollis after waking up (lumpy pillow or toys in the bed). Making sure the sleep space is safe and comfortable may help the torticollis go and stay away.

When should I bring my child back to hospital?

If your child develops any of the following, please bring them back to the Emergency Department:

- Fever, drooling or vomiting
- Increasing or severe pain
- Discloses any recent injury
- Becomes unsteady on their feet
- Develops a headache or their behaviour changes



In most cases torticollis usually goes away on its own. If the pain and/or the twisted neck have not completely resolved in 7-10 days, you should bring your child back for further review. After further assessment the doctor may, on occasion, do some more tests to find out what is causing the torticollis to persist.

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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