

Prevention

Until they can roll by themselves, babies need to sleep on a flat surface on their back. Put their head in a different position each time.

Start “tummy time” and “side time” in the first week, for a couple of minutes after every diaper change. Gradually increase time spent in each of these positions.

Encourage your baby to look equally in both directions.

If your baby already has a flat area on their head, then:

1. Give your baby lots of time lying on each side, so their head is resting on the rounder area instead of the flatter area. This helps to correct the shape.
2. When your baby is on their back give them interesting things to see, so that they are turning their head away from the flat area. This helps to correct the head shape.
3. Also put your baby on their tummy, or hold them, so there is no pressure on the flat area. This prevents the plagiocephaly from getting worse.

Tips

- For “tummy time”, some little babies need to be on a firm incline at first, like your chest or on firm couch cushion while you face them
- Hold the baby bottle using sometimes your right hand, and sometimes your left hand.
- Burp / carry your baby on your right shoulder and your left shoulder so they can look each way.
- Change the position of toys and mobiles regularly so your baby looks in all directions.
- Carry your child with your right arm and your left arm.
- Exersaucers and jumping gadgets do take the pressure off the head, but should not be used until child has the strength to sit on the floor by themselves. Use them for short times. They are not essential for learning motor skills.
- Some babies have a tight neck muscle and need particular attention to encourage them to turn to look at things.
- Referral to a physiotherapist may be recommended for a tight neck muscle or severe plagiocephaly.

If you have **questions**, contact:

- Your Doctor
- A Public Health Nurse
- Your local Child Development Centre

WHAT TO DO ABOUT

Plagiocephaly

Plagiocephaly is the medical term for a head shape that is flat on one area due to prolonged pressure on that part.



You can prevent or treat plagiocephaly so your baby looks like our baby here.

Plagiocephaly is Preventable

Plagiocephaly is Treatable



This brochure was developed by the NONA Child Development Centre Physiotherapy Department as an educational resource for parents & professionals (www.nona-cdc.com)

Plagiocephaly happens because:

- Newborns do not have hard head bones.
- Constant pressure can mould the head bones to be flatter at that place.
- Some babies are born with it, due to their position in the womb.
- Plagiocephaly usually happens when babies sleep with their head always resting on the same part and ALSO spend a large part of the day with their head resting on that same part of their head. It is usually noticed when baby is 2–3 months old. Best time to correct it is before baby is 6 months old.



NOTE:



- There is a lot of pressure on the head from the hard surface of car-seats and swings. Limit the time in these.
- **Playpens** can be a safe place for your baby to be move around and play in.

Back to sleep, side to play

And tummy time - throughout the day!

Playtime on a firm flat surface is important for all babies. Give your baby playtime in each of the following positions every day:

Lying on their Side

- Baby can easily get hands together and feel the connection between the right and left sides of the body;
- Baby strengthens the diagonal muscles along the sides of neck, trunk, shoulder blades and hips;
- Baby's head rests in lots of positions when they are looking around. This helps prevent & treat plagiocephaly by shifting pressure onto various parts of their head.



Lying on their tummy

- Baby strengthens the muscles along the back of neck, body and legs by lifting up against gravity;
- Baby develops strong arms, by pushing up against gravity;
- Baby lengthens front of neck and body as they lift up higher;
- Pressure is off the back of their head. This helps prevent & treat plagiocephaly.



Lying on their Back

- Baby strengthens front of neck, trunk, arms and legs by reaching, kicking, and rolling;
- Baby also gently lengthens muscles along back of neck, trunk and hips as they lift arms & legs up;
- By looking around, baby's head rests in lots of positions. This helps prevent & treat plagiocephaly by shifting pressure onto various parts of their head.

