

Torticollis

Torticollis is a condition of the neck where it is painfully tilted and twisted. The head is often tilted to one side with the chin being pointed toward the other. There are instances where the condition is present at birth, as well as those where it was caused by damage to the blood supply or neck muscles. Sometimes torticollis resolves on its own without any further action. Torticollis is sometimes known as wry neck.

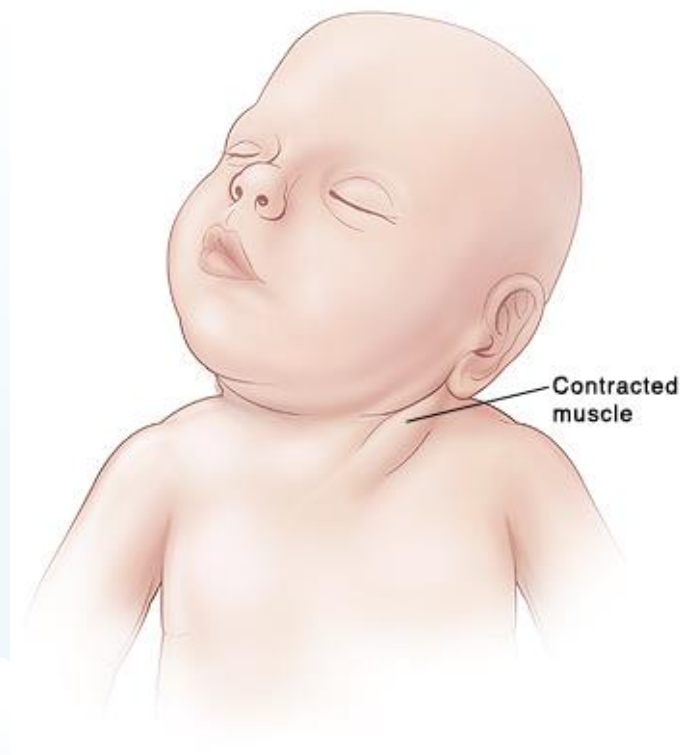
Torticollis can also occur in adults. Typically the sufferer will sleep badly, or with their neck twisted during the night, and when they wake up their neck is locked and tilted to one side. At this point the neck is acutely painful with muscle spasm and inflammation. Movement is limited.

Torticollis Anatomy

Inside of the spinal column, there is a tube for the spinal cord. This thick bundle of nerves starts at the base of the brain. It relays information between the brain and the body. Nestled between the vertebrae are the discs. Each individual disc is attached to the bottom of the vertebra that lies above it and the top of the one below it. Muscles and strong ligaments keep the column together. All of the structures work together to surround, protect and support the spinal cord.

Torticollis in Babies

Torticollis can also be an inherited condition, but it has been known to develop while inside of the womb. If the foetus has their head in the wrong position, the condition ends up being present when they are born. It can also be the result of trauma to the baby during the birth process. Anyone can end up developing the condition after sustaining a nervous system or muscle injury. Most of the time, the cause of the condition isn't known, which is referred to as idiopathic torticollis.



How to Treat Torticollis:

1. Stretching

For those who have congenital forms of the condition, it can be improved by stretching the muscle in the neck. If the treatment begins in the first few months after birth, it can be extremely successful. When this treatment and others don't work, surgery might be needed to correct the problem.

2. Heat

Applying heat to the injured area can help to loosen the muscles and allow them to move better than what they could have before. Begin by applying heat for 5-10 minutes at a time three to five times per day.

3. Physical Therapy / Pediatric Physical Therapy

Using physical therapy, you can work to restore movement in the neck and correct the muscle that seems to be twisted. You will be shown certain exercises and movements to improve the condition and get the muscle back where it should be.

4. Medication

Pain medication and muscle relaxers can help to provide you with some relief when it comes time to engage in physical therapy exercises and work on correcting the muscle that is twisted.

5. Osteopathy, Cranial Osteopathy or Chiropractic

Osteopaths and chiropractors often treat complicated cases of torticollis. In babies, gentle treatment is used to release muscle spasm, or in adults a manipulation may be used to correct the curvature.

Tips:

- If your torticollis resulted from a minor illness or injury, it is entirely treatable and often only temporary.
- Congenital torticollis and more severe forms will often cause long-term complications to your health, so go to your doctor or therapist to get it assessed.
- If you are having trouble performing normal routine tasks, you need to discuss your concerns with your therapist.
- With acute torticollis, you often won't be able to drive from the severity of the condition, and you may find walking in a straight line difficult. Perform gentle mobility exercises as recommended by your therapist to improve the mobility of the joints in your neck.

