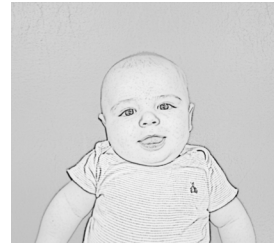


What is Congenital Muscular Torticollis in infants?

In brief, CMT is most often caused by shortening of muscles on one side of the neck, which results in a persistent rotation and tilt of the head. The condition is relatively common and occurs in approximately one out of every 60 births. CMT appears more in boys than in girls, and is additionally associated with an increased rate of developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH), and developmental delay. There are also non-muscular causes of CMT, but they happen much less frequently (abnormal vertebrae shape, issues of vision or the central nervous system).



So what does it look like, and could it hurt my baby?

Many parents of infants with CMT begin to realize something is not quite right when looking at photos of their child. They notice that the baby's head is always turned and tilted the same way, regardless of body position. Others may have it brought to their attention by a family member or during a routine visit to the pediatrician.

In general, CMT can be classified into 4 types, ranging from very mild to very severe. The majority of cases are type I and II, they seem to be related to the short period of fetal restraint (reduced room to move) just before or during birth. Types I and II tend to resolve fairly quickly if intervention is consistent and initiated early. Type III CMT is more resistant to change however, and is more associated with decreased amniotic fluid in utero, breech position, infant length >19 cm, or birth trauma.

With the onset of the Back To Sleep program, torticollis is more difficult to resolve on its own. Decreased tummy time and persistent tilt of the head to one side when on their backs, along with prolonged swing and infant seat use tends to reinforce the shortened position. The jaw and skull may then become somewhat flatter in one area, and the ear may be pulled forward on the shortened side. While this is not life threatening, it can affect shoulder and arm use, neck motion and in rare cases dental occlusion.

What is the general treatment for CMT?

The first step is always to consult your pediatrician, who will screen your baby for the presence of CMT and possible non-muscular causes. They may then refer you to a pediatric physical therapist for more specific intervention. This typically includes a positioning, gentle stretching and strengthening program uniquely designed for your baby.

If your child has been diagnosed with torticollis, or if you have questions, please call me or join our mommy and baby torticollis group. I am here to help!



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