

Erb's Palsy

Information for Parents and Carers

What is Erbs' Palsy?

This is also known as obstetric brachial plexus palsy and is a condition which results in a weakness of the baby's arm, and is thought to be due to stretching of the nerves supplying the muscles of the arm. It can also affect the feeling (sensation) in the arm. Nearly all children recover completely, but occasionally there is some persistent nerve damage. It is important that some physiotherapy exercises are started early, which aim to prevent the arm becoming fixed in an abnormal position, and improve the chances of a full recovery.

What can I do to help?

In the first five days following birth, try to follow these instructions:

1. Prevent stretching, pulling and pressure on the affected shoulder.

- Provide support for your babies arm by tucking a blanket under the arm when they are lying down.
- During dressing, put the affected arm into the garment first and when taking clothes off, leave it until last.
- Do not let the arm drop and hang without support.
- Support the affected arm when picking up and carrying your baby by swaddling a shawl or blanket loosely around shoulders or hold your baby's arm close to her/his body.
- Do not lie your baby on the affected side.

2. Encourage active movement and sensory awareness of affected arm.

- Make your baby's hand grasp your finger and gently guide their hand to their mouth and let them suck on their hand.
- Encourage further grasp of your finger, bring your baby's elbow into flexed (bent) position, and turn the hand outwards (thumb facing outwards).
- Stimulate the skin by stroking across the back of the hand and up the arm.

3. Skincare

- Your baby may require extra care during cleaning the skin in the underarm crease- gently bring the arm away a short distance from your baby's side and clean and dry the skin crease.

These guidelines apply for the first 5 days of life or until your first follow up appointment at the sick children's outpatient clinic

If you have any concerns, contact:

Physiotherapy Department, Royal Hospital for Children and Young People,
Edinburgh:

Tel: **0131 312 1079.**

For further Information regarding the condition we recommend:

www.erbspalsygroup.co.uk