

Acquired torticollis

Information for parents and carers

Torticollis is a name used to describe tightening of the neck muscles causing the head to tilt to one side. Torticollis can either be present at the time of birth (congenital) or happen later (acquired). This leaflet will discuss management of Acquired torticollis.

Acquired torticollis most commonly occurs due to muscle spasm. The muscle spasm tends to come on suddenly without any history of injury or any other symptoms such as sore throat or temperature. There will be pain on the side of the tight muscles and the head might feel stuck or too painful to move.

If your child has suffered an injury before the muscle spasm, they should be seen in the Emergency Department.

Management

Give good amounts of pain relief regularly for the first 24-48 hours and then as required.

- Paracetamol and Ibuprofen – dose as per the recommendation on the bottle/packet.
- Paracetamol and Ibuprofen are even better at treating pain if you give them at the same time.
- Give every 6 hours in the first few days.

It can be useful to put a hot or cold pack over the painful area to reduce pain and spasm.

Encourage gentle exercises frequently:

- A – Look up, look down
- B – Look side to side
- C – Stretch the ear towards the shoulder
- D – Bring the chin to chest, stick the chin out.

Gentle movement of the neck is important to stop the muscles stiffening up.

Things should be much improved within a couple of days. If things are not improving or there is any ongoing concern, you should speak firstly to your GP.

Things to look out for when your child has a sore neck:

- Any fever
- Pain or swelling on touching the neck
- Drooling or difficulty swallowing
- Change in voice.

If you notice any of these symptoms, you should bring your child to the Emergency Department. If you have any concerns about noisy or difficulty breathing, you should contact 999.