



**The Leeds  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust

# Torticollis

Information for parents and carers

**Torticollis is a common problem seen in children and normally gets better with simple treatments you can provide to your child at home.**

### **What is torticollis?**

Torticollis or “wry neck” is commonly caused by a spasm of the muscles in the neck, giving the appearance of the neck being in a tilted position. It causes pain and discomfort, particularly on moving the neck. Most children feel better after pain relief and rest from activities.

### **What causes torticollis?**

Most children get torticollis following sleeping in an unusual position, and the pain often starts when they wake up, due to the muscles being in spasm. Similarly simple and minor injuries may cause torticollis for the same reason.

Some children develop torticollis due to infections, such as viruses or tonsillitis, due to swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck.

The clinician who has assessed you will aim to identify the cause of your child’s torticollis and provide advice and treatment for this underlying problem.

### **How do you diagnose Torticollis?**

Torticollis itself isn’t actually a diagnosis, but more a symptom of an underlying problem, most commonly a muscle spasm of the neck. It is extremely rare that children with torticollis will need any investigations, but if your child does, the clinician will explain why and how those tests will be done.

## How can I help it get better?

It may take a few days for your child to return to normal.

Things that can help them get better are:

- Avoid activities which may increase strain on the neck such as sports, trampolines, bouncy castles, until pain free for 3-5 days.
- Give regular ibuprofen, or other medications/painkillers recommended by your clinician, for the first 2-3 days.
- Use a warm compress (a clean cloth soaked in warm water) over the area of pain, for no longer than 20 minutes 2-3 times a day.

## Will my child need follow up?

It is rare that children require follow up for torticollis. Some children with more severe symptoms may need to be reviewed in the next 2-3 days in the Paediatric Review clinic in the Paediatric Emergency Department. If this is necessary, your clinician will explain why and how to make the appointment.

If you have been discharged home, with no follow up, but your child is no better in seven days, try to see your GP who can see if you need any more investigations, or further review at the hospital.

## What should I look out for?

You should return to Paediatric ED if your child

- Complains of pins or needles in their arms, legs or face
- Develops a high fever ( $> 38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) with torticollis
- Is struggling to swallow or is drooling
- Suddenly cannot move the neck despite pain relief
- Is struggling with breathing or has noisy breathing.



## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

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