

# TORTICOLLIS

(Wryneck)



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A problem of the neck muscles that causes a twisted head movement. Torticollis is a type of movement disorder (dystonia). It usually affects adults ages 30 to 60 (women more than men). Congenital muscle torticollis is a type that affects newborns.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms may begin slowly and progress over time or develop suddenly.
- Head turns (or tilts) toward one shoulder while the chin turns toward the opposite shoulder. The head may be pulled forward or backward.
- The head may not move from the abnormal position (tonic), may have jerky head movements (clonic), or may have both types.
- Neck muscles are tense and tender.
- There may be pain in the neck, back, or shoulder.
- In a newborn, a lump may be felt in the neck muscle.

### CAUSES

- In newborns, the exact cause is unknown. It may be due to a muscle injury prior to, during, or after birth. There are other possible causes. It sometimes occurs along with a hip dislocation.
- In other cases, the nerves and muscles involved are affected by various causes. Sometimes, no cause is found. This is called idiopathic spasmodic torticollis.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

#### *Newborn:*

- Birth defect.
- Injury to neck muscles or vertebrae (spinal bones) at birth or later.
- Breech delivery of newborn.
- Large baby.

#### *Others:*

- Family history of torticollis.
- Cervical spine problems (injury, fractures, scar tissue, tumor, infections, ligament problems, and others).
- Inflammatory problems (such as myositis and others).
- Certain prescribed drugs.
- Some drugs of abuse.
- Infection in tissues around neck muscles.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Congenital torticollis can usually be corrected with muscle-stretching exercises or surgery, if needed.
- Other forms often improve with treatment. Healing can sometimes occur, and healing time varies. Some patients may take only a few days or weeks. Other patients may have neck problems for months or years.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Condition becomes chronic.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam of the affected area and ask questions about your symptoms and activities. Medical tests may include x-rays and studies of muscle movements.
- Congenital torticollis is initially treated with physical therapy, including daily passive therapy for at least a year. If therapy is not successful, then surgery to lengthen neck muscles is performed.
- For other forms of torticollis, drug therapies may help, along with physical therapy and massages.
- If a drug is causing the problem, it should be stopped.
- A neck brace or collar may be recommended.
- Relieve pain from neck spasms with heat or massage. Take hot showers or use warm, moist compresses, deep-heating ointments, or heating pad.
- Stress may worsen symptoms. Learn stress-reduction techniques, including biofeedback.
- Ultrasound therapy may be recommended.
- Rarely, a surgical procedure to denervate (cut the nerves) in the neck muscles may be recommended.
- To learn more: National Spasmodic Torticollis Association, 9920 Talbot Ave., Suite 233, Fountain Valley, CA 92708; (800) 487-8385; website: [www.torticollis.org](http://www.torticollis.org).

### MEDICATIONS

- Muscle relaxants, anti-inflammatories, or other drugs may be prescribed. They may be taken by mouth or injected by your health care provider.
- Injections of botulinum toxin type A into the neck muscles may be prescribed.

### ACTIVITY

Activity limits will be determined by your symptoms.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of torticollis.
- You have neck pain or spasms that last over 1 week.

Special notes:

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More notes on the back of this page