



## Congenital Torticollis

### What is congenital torticollis?

An infant that keeps his or her head tilted or turned to one side may have a condition called congenital torticollis. “Congenital” means the condition is present at birth. “Torticollis” means wry, twisted or bent neck. Because the child’s neck range of motion is limited, he/she may keep the head positioned to one side.

Symptoms may include:

- head tilting to one side
- limited neck range of motion
- one side of the face or skull flattened
- lump or swelling in the muscle of the neck.

### What causes torticollis?

No one knows exactly what causes this condition. There are many theories, including that the muscle is stretched during delivery, in-utero positioning, low amniotic fluid and muscle imbalance. Congenital torticollis typically is a result of the shortening of a muscle in the neck. If the tightened or shortened muscle is not stretched, it may result in permanent limited neck range of motion and or flattening of the head and face structures.

### Why is my child being referred to outpatient physical therapy?

At Kenny Kids, our pediatric physical therapists can evaluate your child by looking at his or her neck range of motion, neck and body strength, and motor skills. After determining which muscles are affected, you may be instructed in a home exercise program.

This program will include gentle stretches, positioning techniques, and strengthening exercises and activities. Your therapist will give you helpful ideas for carrying and holding your child, and tips on how to use your child’s environment to stretch and strengthen muscles. The therapist may also recommend direct physical therapy services to stretch and strengthen your child’s neck muscles.

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### **Kenny Kids™ Pediatric Rehabilitation Program Locations**

#### **Kenny Kids – Buffalo**

*Across the street from  
Buffalo Hospital*  
300 Catlin St., Suite 101  
Buffalo, MN 55313  
763-684-3888

#### **Kenny Kids – Coon Rapids**

3111 124th Ave. NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55433  
763-236-7337

#### **Kenny Kids – Owatonna**

Owatonna Hospital  
2250 NW 26th St.  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
507-977-2150



### **What can I do at home?**

- Place toys and other stimulating objects in positions where the child must turn his/her head to see them. This encourages the child to stretch the affected muscles. Try positioning your child in his/her crib so the stimulation will be coming from the right or left side. This will help motivate the child to turn his/her head voluntarily.
- Position your child during feeding on your right or left arm. This allows a gentle stretch and encourages neck movement.
- Carry your child in a side-lying position, facing away from you. Hold your child by placing one arm under the head on the side of the tight muscle. Support your child with your other arm. This position will help stretch the affected muscle.
- Use a towel roll on the side of your child's head to keep it more in the center.
- Place your child on his/her tummy frequently (more than once a day) with toys or a person in front at eye level. This motivates the child to try to hold the head up and turn it. You can use a towel roll placed under your child's chest or arms to assist in holding the head up.
- Many babies do not really enjoy tummy time. If your child gets really upset with this activity, try for short periods of time, several times during the day. You also can try positioning your child on a wedge or on an incline.