

getting worse - and allowing natural correction to begin. So play with your baby on their tummy. Babies like to learn to lift their heads and look around them.

Sleeping pattern - Adjust their sleeping pattern so that everything exciting is in the direction that encourages your child to turn his or her head the wrong way by altering the position of any toys or mobiles. A rolled up towel under the mattress may help your child sleep with less pressure on the flattest part of the head. Check how he or she is lying in the car seat or buggy too.

Physiotherapy - for those children with difficulty turning the head in one direction, physiotherapy can be very helpful. The sooner the head turns as easily one way as the other, the sooner natural correction of head shape can begin.

Contacts

If you are worried about your child following discharge please take them to your GP or A&E, if you have any queries/questions please contact ward 10 on 452010.



The hospital is able to arrange for an interpreter to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay through INTRAN.

If you need an interpreter or a person to sign, please let us know.

If you require a large print version of this booklet, please contact PALS on 01493 453240

Positional Plagiocephaly or Infant Flat Head



Information for Parents, Relatives and Carers

What is positional plagiocephaly?

This is a disorder that affects the skull, making the back or side of your baby's head appear flattened.

The skull is made up of several 'plates' of bone which, when we are born, are not tightly joined together. As we grow older, they gradually fuse - or stick - together. When we are young, they are soft enough to be moulded, and this means their shape can be altered by pressure on it to give part - usually the back - of a baby's head a flattened look.

What causes positional plagiocephaly?

Positional plagiocephaly is produced by pressure from the outside on part of the skull. It can occur while the baby is still developing in the womb but in recent years, flattening occurring after the baby is born has become much more frequent.

Why is this?

The main cause of pressure is the baby's sleeping position. Since the Back to Sleep campaign, doctors have recommended that all babies sleep on their backs to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS or 'cot death').

A result of this is that babies now spend much of their early lives lying on their backs, while sleeping, while being carried or while in car seats. This is a time when the baby's skull is softest and most easily moulded into a different shape.

Despite this, doctors still recommend that babies sleep on their backs as the benefit of reducing SIDS far outweighs any dangers due to positional plagiocephaly.

If your baby lies flat on his or her back, any positional moulding is likely to be evenly spread across the back of the head. Some babies have a tendency to turn their heads in one direction

more easily than the other for the first few months of life. If these babies develop positional plagiocephaly it will affect the side of the back of the head that he or she always lies on.

In severe cases, moulding of one side of the back of the head can produce unevenness at the front, although this is usually mild.

What is the outlook for babies with positional plagiocephaly?

For children with positional plagiocephaly, the 'natural' shape of the head is entirely normal - it is the moulding that has pushed it out of shape. This means that as soon as the moulding ceases, the head can start growing back towards its normal, natural shape. This will happen when the baby is old enough not to lie in one position for a long time, and to change sleeping position lots of times each night, and any tendency to turn the head more easily in one direction than another has disappeared.

Positional plagiocephaly does not affect how your child's brain develops or cause any brain abnormalities.

What treatments are available?

In mild cases, babies may not need any active treatment.

There are several ways of encouraging natural improvement in head shape to be more effective:

Early recognition of the plagiocephaly - the younger the child is when it is recognised, the better the chances of stopping any progression.

'Tummy time' - We are not suggesting that your baby should sleep on his or her tummy while still young (remember the Back to Sleep campaign), but the more time babies spend on their tummies, the better the chance of stopping the plagiocephaly