What is torticollis?
Torticollis happens when a muscle in the neck (sterno-cleido mastoid muscle) is shorter or weaker. This muscle is used to:
- Bend the neck (bringing the ear toward the shoulder)
- Turn the head toward the other shoulder

A baby with torticollis may:
- Have a tight neck muscle on one side
- Have a weak neck muscle on the opposite side
- Prefer to move or look to one side

What causes torticollis and plagiocephaly?
Torticollis and plagiocephaly are fairly common. There are many possible causes, like:
- Not enough time spent on the tummy
- Position in the uterus before birth
- Events during birth
- Baby staying in one place or position for too long

Babies may have other problems that can make it easier for torticollis and plagiocephaly to happen, like:
- Hip problems
- Eye problems
- Hearing problems
- Delays with physical development
- Bone problems
- Other medical problems

What if physiotherapy doesn’t help?
Physiotherapy is almost always all that is needed to fix torticollis and plagiocephaly. But if the problems can’t be solved with physiotherapy, your child may need:
- A neck brace
- A special helmet to prevent further head changes
- Surgery (this is quite rare)

What is plagiocephaly?
This is a flattening across the back and side of a baby’s head. This may cause:
- Changes to the face on the flat side of the head
- One ear to shift forward

What should we do if we think our baby has plagiocephaly or torticollis?
Talk with your doctor right away. The earlier treatment begins, the better.
How can we get to see a physiotherapist?
To see a physiotherapist at CHEO, you’ll need a referral from your family doctor or pediatrician. Your doctor can mail the referral letter to:

Physiotherapy
Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario
401 Smyth Rd.
Ottawa, ON
K1H 8L1

The referral can also be faxed to us at: 613-738-4893