If positioning doesn’t help...

- Babies who have a severely flattened area that does not correct with repositioning may need to see a specialist. The specialist may suggest your baby wear a molding helmet.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?


WEB SITES:

- www.plagiocephaly.org/about.htm
- www.mcg.edu/SOM/surgery/neuros/Plagio.htm
- www.orthoseek.com/articles/ifs-right.html
- www.kidsplastsurg.com/cranmold.html
- www.crha-health.ab.ca/hlthconn/items/plagio.htm
What is it?

"Positional Plagiocephaly" is the medical term for flattening on one side of the back of the head caused by lying in the same position. A flat area can develop quickly over a few weeks or may take several months. The baby may have one ear that sticks out and may also have facial changes on the flat side of the head.

Head Shapes: looking down from above a baby's head.

Normal Head Shape

Positional Plagiocephaly

Why
does it happen?

Why do some babies get a flat area on their head?

• Some babies like to turn their head to the same side when asleep or when sitting in their car seat or swing.
• Some babies are born with flat areas on their heads from their position in the womb. For example, twin babies don’t have as much room to change position.
• Other babies keep their heads to one side because of a neck muscle problem called “torticollis”.
• Premature babies have softer skull bones.

Does having positional plagiocephaly cause problems?

• In most cases, having a flattened area will not affect the baby’s brain growth or mental development. A rounded head shape, however, is best for a normal appearance.

What can I do if my baby’s head has a flat area?

• Parents often find that their baby’s head shape improves quickly with proper positioning.

Note the times when your baby is on the flat area. Does it happen:

• when your baby is sleeping?
• when you are holding or carrying your baby?
• When your baby is in the car seat or swing?
• when your baby is playing?
• when your baby is on the change table?
• other _______________________

Position your baby off the flat area as much as possible

• Place a small rolled up blanket under your baby’s shoulder, on the same side as the flat area. This will help keep your baby’s head turned away from the flat side.
• Move the crib so that your baby turns his or her head away from the flat area when he or she looks toward the door. Place toys and mobiles so your baby turns his head away from the flat side.
• Provide lots of supervised tummy time and side lying play when your baby is awake. This helps develop strong neck, shoulder and arm muscles. Make sure your baby has toys that will promote tummy and side lying play.
• Avoid pressure on the flat area of your baby’s head when feeding, holding and carrying your baby.
• Avoid long periods of time in car seats, baby seats and swings where baby’s head is in the same position.
• Provide lots of supervised time to play in “Exersaucer” as soon as your baby has good head control.

Ask your doctor to assess your baby’s neck motion

• If you notice your baby holds his or her head to one side or has trouble turning his or her head, your baby may need neck stretching exercises.
• Better reshaping of the head is more likely with good neck motion.
• Your doctor may recommend either home neck stretching exercises or refer your baby to see a physiotherapist.

If you have questions, you can call the Public Health Information Line at (613) 724-4179 during business hours to speak to a Public Health Nurse.