Management of Torticollis / Head Tilt / Sternomastoid Tumour and Plagiocephaly

**Definition:**

**Torticollis** or wry neck is a clinical symptom and sign characterized by a lateral head tilt and chin rotation toward the side opposite to the tilt.

Some reports have indicated a relationship between Torticollis and DDH and have recommended a hip ultrasound or X-ray for this group.

Rarely if Torticollis is not treated, it may lead to contactures and need ortho referral for Botox or surgical release.

**Selected Differential Diagnosis in Infants:**

- **Congenital Muscular Torticollis**
- Postural Torticollis
- Nonmuscular causes
  - Inflammatory
  - Ocular Torticollis
  - Neurogenic Torticollis
  - Osseous Torticollis

**Management of Torticollis:**

Refer to physiotherapist for r/v on PNW or NICU. Parental physiotherapy generally brings resolution in 90% of cases.

Management of Plagiocephaly:

Mild cases may respond to advice, e.g. the role of ‘tummy time’
- Out-patient or community physiotherapy referral:
  - Advise and educate regarding positions for sleep & play
  - Neck exercises
  - Stimulation to improve active range of motion and ensure symmetrical development of motor skills

There is a role for skull x-ray or low dose CT skull if craniosynostosis is suspected clinically on examination.

**Definition:**

**Plagiocephaly** is a condition in which the head shape is asymmetric in either the coronal or sagittal plane. Most common- Occipital Plagiocephaly, i.e., flattening of the back of the head usually due to positioning.

Other types of head shape abnormalities:

- **Scaphocephaly** - Early fusion of the sagittal suture
- **Anterior plagiocephaly** - Early fusion of 1 coronal suture
- **Brachycephaly** - Early bilateral coronal suture fusion
- **Posterior plagiocephaly** - Early closure of 1 lambdoid suture
- **Trigonocephaly** - Early fusion of the metopic suture
References:


This care pathway has been produced by the National Paediatric and Neonatology Clinical Programme. It is aimed at medical, nursing and allied health professionals working in Irish neonatal units.

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