

Plagiocephaly

Frequently Asked Questions

What is plagiocephaly?

If your baby's head has a flat spot, your baby may have plagiocephaly [PLAY-jee-oh-SEF-uh-lee]. This is fairly common in newborns.

The baby may have:

- A flat spot on the back of the head.
- Flat spots on the back and side of the head.
- Flat spots, and one side of the forehead is further forward.
- Flat spots, and one ear is further forward than the other ear.

When should I be concerned?

Most babies' heads are not round at birth. But usually, a newborn's head will become round within a few weeks.

Talk to your doctor if:

- Your baby's head is not getting rounder.
- Your baby holds his or her head in one position.
- You notice that a flat spot is getting worse.

In rare cases, a flat spot is a sign of a serious problem (craniosynostosis). This occurs when the joints of the skull close early. Early treatment is vital to prevent brain damage.

What causes plagiocephaly?

This may be caused by:

- Premature birth (the skull is softer than that of a full-term baby) or the baby's position before birth.
- Torticollis (your baby's head stays in one position due to stiff neck muscles on one side).
- Often falling asleep in the same position in an infant carrier, or having too little tummy time when awake. (Too much time lying on the back may put pressure on one part of the head.)

How is it treated?

Your doctor may refer you to a physical therapist.

The therapist will:

- Teach you how to position your child to relieve pressure on the head.
- Teach activities to make your baby's neck stronger.
- Check your baby for delayed motor skills caused by poor head and neck control.
- Assess the need for a helmet. Some children need a helmet for a short time to reshape a flat skull.

Questions?

Call your doctor, or contact Fairview Rehabilitation Services (612-273-2897) to find a clinic near you.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, please let us know. We provide many free services including sign language interpreters, oral interpreters, TTYs, telephone amplifiers, note takers and written materials.