

# Cranial Cervical Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute

## Who We Are

The Cranial Cervical Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute evaluates and treats infants and young children with plagiocephaly (abnormal shape of the head) and torticollis (head tilt).

Infants and young children can develop plagiocephaly and torticollis from sleeping on their backs. In 1992, the American Academy of Pediatrics began recommending that infants be placed on their backs for sleeping, to reduce the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), which can occur when infants are placed on their tummies to sleep. The “Back to Sleep” campaign was created to educate families and clinicians, and is credited with reducing the incidence of SIDS by more than 50 percent.

However, this change in sleeping position has created an increase in cranial deformities. Recent studies estimate the incidence of cranial deformation is as high as 46 percent in otherwise healthy infants.

## Symptoms

Babies with torticollis may have trouble with neck movement because of muscle stiffness or weakness. They may tilt their heads noticeably in one direction, and may lean back to view objects. Their chins may point slightly upward.

More than half of babies with torticollis also have plagiocephaly, a flat spot on the affected side of the head caused by lying consistently in one position. Without treatment, torticollis can affect the symmetry of gross motor skills like vision and balance.



## Our Team

An experienced, interdisciplinary care team works with each patient and family to manage a child’s plagiocephaly and/or torticollis. Our team includes:

- Physical medicine and rehabilitation physician
- Physical therapist

## Our Approach

Plagiocephaly and torticollis are usually treated using many of the same techniques. Early intervention is key for successful outcomes. Therefore, we recommend an evaluation between birth and 12 months of age.

The majority of children who develop an abnormal shape of the head do not require surgery and are otherwise healthy. Regular physical therapy exercises help a baby move the affected side of their neck, creating balance. In most cases, plagiocephaly and torticollis in children can improve with a few weeks or months of therapy, when combined with daily exercises at home. The condition rarely returns as a baby grows.



## Treatment Options

Nonsurgical therapy options for treatment include:

- Increased tummy time to improve neck strength
- Physical therapy with special exercises to increase stretching the neck
- Helmet therapy to reshape the skull—the helmet puts gentle pressure on the baby’s head to encourage proper growth

Parents and caregivers should always place babies on their backs for sleeping, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to prevent SIDS, even though it might mean the possibility of a baby developing an abnormally shaped head. Should cranial deformation occur, therapeutic options are available for treatment.



### Contact Information

#### Cranial Cervical Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call **443-923-9400**, or call toll-free at **888-554-2080**. TTY users, please contact us at **443-923-2645**, or dial **711** to make a Maryland Relay call.

**KennedyKrieger.org**

#### Physicians and Healthcare Professionals

To make a referral, email us at **FindASpecialist@KennedyKrieger.org** or call our Physician Referral Line at **443-923-9403**.

#### Clinic Location

801 North Broadway  
Baltimore, MD 21205

#### Mailing Address

707 North Broadway  
Baltimore, MD 21205

*Photographs used are for illustrative purposes only, and any person shown is a model.*

Kennedy Krieger Institute recognizes and respects the rights of employees, trainees, and patients and students, and their families. At Kennedy Krieger, we ground our care, services, training and research in treating others with respect and civility. We respect the cultural identity of every person. Kennedy Krieger Institute does not discriminate against people based on, but not limited to, perceived or actual race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, language spoken, accent, marital status, veteran or military status, immigration status, disability, religion, pregnancy status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. We strive for equitable care for all individuals for whom we provide services, training, education and research participation. We encourage employees, trainees, and patients and students, and their families, to become active partners in the services provided by asking questions, seeking resources and advocating for their needs. © 2021 Kennedy Krieger Institute 07/2021



Learn More. Get Involved. Stay Connected. Visit **KennedyKrieger.org/Connect**

