

How Do I Prevent a Flat Head?

- Provide lots of supervised tummy time when baby is awake.
- Change your baby's position frequently i.e. laying on back, side, tummy, or sitting.



- Try to avoid having your infant spend long periods of time in infant seats or swings, where your baby's head may be in the same position.
- Alternate the side on which you carry or hold your baby.
- Change the position of mobiles and other toys in your baby's crib, encouraging him/her to look in both directions.
- If your baby's crib is against the wall, place your baby at opposite ends of the crib each night. Babies prefer to look out into the room and will position their head accordingly.

What Can I Do If My Baby Already Has a Flat Head?

- Continue with the prevention strategies discussed above.
- Position your baby in a way that helps take the pressure off the flat area(s) of the skull. Place a rolled blanket under your baby's shoulder on the same side of the flat area. This will help keep your baby's head turned away from the flat area.



- Try to avoid putting pressure on the flat areas of your baby's head when holding and carrying your baby.
- Discuss with a specialist if helmet therapy would be an appropriate option for your baby.

Thames Valley Children's Centre

Children's Hospital
of Western Ontario
London Health Sciences Centre

Patient & Family Information

POSITIONAL PLAGIOCEPHALY



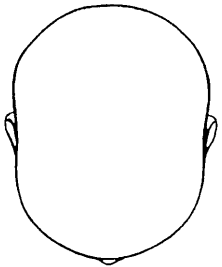
How to Prevent Your Baby from Developing a Flat Head

Children's Hospital
of Western Ontario
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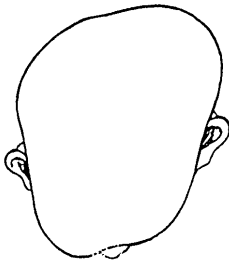
Paediatric Neurosurgery
Paediatric Physiotherapy

Baby Flat Head

- Since the introduction of the "Back to Sleep" program, the rate of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) have decreased. This is GREAT NEWS!
- However, because so many babies are now spending long periods of time on their backs, there has been an increase in the number of babies developing flat heads.
- Babies' skull bones are very soft and flexible. Their heads can be easily molded when left in one position for long periods of time.
- This flattening of a baby's skull is often called "**POSITIONAL PLAGIOCEPHALY**". It may be characterized by a parallelogram shaped head when viewed from above.



Normal Head Shape

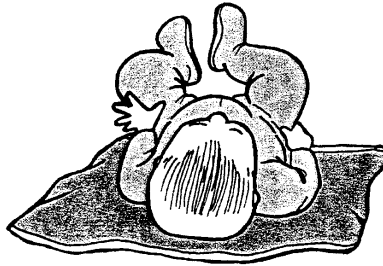


Positional Plagiocephaly

Head shapes looking down from above a baby's head.

What Causes Some Babies to Develop a Flat Head?

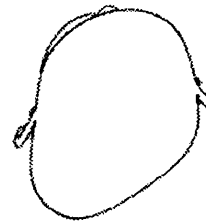
- Babies who spend lots of time lying on their backs or lying with their heads turned to one side are at an increased risk for developing flat areas.



Babies who lie on their backs may develop flattened areas on the back of their skull.



Babies who prefer to look to one side may develop flattened areas on the side of their skull.



- Some babies are born with these flat areas due to limited room in the womb.

- Premature babies have softer skull bones that can be more easily molded. This places them at an increased risk for developing flat areas.
- Some babies have tight neck muscles, a condition called TORTICOLLIS. This decreases babies' ability to change their head position, resulting in prolonged positioning with pressure on one side of their head.

Can Having a Flat Head Affect My Baby's Growth?

- In most cases having a flat area will not affect brain growth or development. The brain continues to grow regardless of the skull shape.
- Plagiocephaly usually only affects a baby's appearance. It may cause the head and face to develop unevenly, especially the eyes, ears, nose, forehead, and jaw.

Once a Flat Head Always a Flat Head?

- Up until about twelve months of age babies' skull bones are very soft. During this time it is possible to improve head shape through counter positioning or external molding devices (such as helmets).
- Generally the earlier counter positioning techniques are started, the greater the chance of improved results.