

Positional Torticollis and the Importance of Tummy Time

Meet Jonathan

6 Months of Age

Jonathan started physical therapy at 4 months because his mother was concerned his head was tilted to one side.

Jonathan was diagnosed with torticollis, a common condition which is a shortening of the muscles on one side of the neck and/or trunk. Without treatment, torticollis can limit a baby's ability to achieve basic skills like sitting, crawling, and eventually walking.

You can see how his back is curved due to the shortened muscles on one side. This prevents him from learning to sit independently. He also has trouble reaching for toys with his right arm.



The therapist is helping Jonathan by showing him what it feels like to sit the right way. Her hand on his hip helps shift his weight so he can learn to reach and grasp with both hands.

Jonathan's parents also consistently followed a home program recommended by his therapist, which essentially "retrains" Jonathan's muscles to improve his posture and muscle control.



9 Months of Age

At 9 months, Jonathan is able to sit independently and the curve in his spine is greatly reduced. He is able to reach without losing his balance using either the right or left arm. Here you can see he is still putting more of his weight on his left hip.



The therapist continues to work on retraining Jonathan's muscles by using her hands to simulate proper posture. She has strategically placed toys around Jonathan to help him reach and stretch, which will improve his symmetry, muscle strength, and balance.



11 Months of Age

At 11 months, Jonathan is now able to sit with a straight back and weight evenly distributed on both hips. The earlier curve we observed at 6 months is no longer visible. He will still make occasional visits to a physical therapist so she can monitor for any recurrence of neck or spinal asymmetry which could potentially contribute to scoliosis later in life.



Notice how freely Jonathan reaches with both the right and left arms, easily moving the limbs away from the body while maintaining his sitting balance. This is a major change from just 4 months ago when he kept his right upper arm close to his body for stability.



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