

When Your Baby has Brachycephaly

What is brachycephaly?

- Brachycephaly is when your baby has an atypical head shape. There is a flattened area in the middle of the back of the head.
- The head will look wide (see Figure 1) and/or tall (see Figure 2).

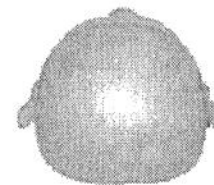


Figure 1

What causes brachycephaly?

- Brachycephaly is caused by outside pressure on the skull. Most often, brachycephaly is caused by sleeping on the back looking straight up towards the ceiling and not turning the head.
- Brachycephaly can develop before birth if:
 - the baby sits low in the pelvis
 - there is less room in the uterus than normal (e.g., twins or triplets)
- There are more babies with brachycephaly because of positioning in:
 - baby swings
 - infant carrier car seats
 - overhead baby gyms
 - the “Back to Sleep” campaign, which recommends your baby sleep on the back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

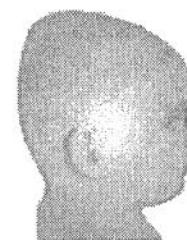


Figure 2

Will brachycephaly affect other parts of my baby's head or face?

- Depending on how much flattening there is on the head:
 - your child's ears may look like they are shifted up or down
 - your child might have a bump above the ears
 - the head might look wider than normal
 - the head might be higher at the back, making the head look tall
 - your baby's face might not look the same on both sides (the cheek might look fuller and the eye might look wider on one side)

What are the best ways to position my baby with brachycephaly?

- Your healthcare provider will show you what positions are best when your baby:
 - feeds
 - plays
 - sleeps
 - has a diaper change

What about positioning when my baby is asleep?

- For sleeping, your baby should be positioned on the back with the head positioned to the left one night, and to the right the next night. Do not add any extra rolls or pillows to the crib.
- Remove hanging mobiles and use crib bar toys instead.
- Put crib toys on the outside crib rail only.

What is the best position for my baby during play?

- When you are with your baby for playtime, try these positions:
 - alternate toys from the left side one time and on the right the next time
 - position your baby on the stomach (tummy time) for a few minutes several times a day
 - alternate sides when your baby is lying down (left side one time and the right side the next time)
- Limit the time your baby spends in a:
 - car seat
 - bouncy seat
 - swing
- Use a stroller or baby-wearing device (e.g., sling, Snuggli™, Baby Bjorn™) when you are out (instead of leaving your baby in the car seat) to encourage movement and looking around.
- Always put your baby's seat so any stimulation (e.g., siblings) is on the left or right side. Do this when your baby is in a:
 - play seat
 - high chair
 - jumper
 - bouncy seat or swing (if your healthcare provider says it is okay to use)
 - standing entertainment centre

What do I need to know about feeding my baby?

- When bottle feeding, alternate the way you hold your baby (e.g., one feed your baby looks to the left to see you and the next feed your baby looks to the right).
- When breastfeeding, try different positions to alternate the direction your baby looks at you during a feeding.
- In a highchair, feed your baby from the left side one time and the right the next time.

What do I need to know about diaper changes and baths?

- For diaper changes and baths, be on your baby's left side one diaper change/bath and on the right for the next.

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.