Plagiocephaly (Flat Head Syndrome)
Prepared by the Child Care Wellness Team at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

What Is It?
• Babies can develop a flat spot on the back of their head
• May also be called Positional Plagiocephaly

How Does It Happen?
• The most common cause of a flat head is sleeping in the same position too long
• It can start before birth if there is pressure on baby’s skull
• It can also be caused by tight neck muscles, a condition called torticollis

What Are the Signs to Look For?
• Flattening of one side of baby’s head
• Less hair on that part of the head
• The ear of the flattened side may look pushed forward

Can It Affect the Brain?
• Flat Head Syndrome does not affect the development of the brain

How Can Flat Head Syndrome Prevented and Treated?
• Must be diagnosed by a physician
• While baby is awake, limit time in swings, bouncy chairs or strollers to less than 15 minutes twice a day to decrease the time spent resting the head on a flat surface
• Always remove a child from a car seat unless transporting
• ONLY allow a baby to sleep while lying on his/her back in a safe crib or a pack n’ play to reduce the risk of SIDS
• Provide supervised tummy time by lying baby on his/her stomach while awake to strengthen neck muscles
• Hold baby more often
• Alternate the position of the head while at play or sleep on back from right to left and left to right
• NEVER use wedge pillows or other items to keep a baby in one position
• Physical therapy and/or home exercises may be prescribed
• Use of a helmet may be prescribed to facilitate normal growth

Sources:
Kidshealth.org
Mayo Clinic
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