

Skull Deformities and Craniosynostosis

What is plagiocephaly or positional molding? How is it treated?

Skull deformities are a very common reason for referral to pediatric neurosurgery. The most common deformity is plagiocephaly or positional molding of the back of the head. Positional molding has become very common with the “Back to Sleep” campaign. It is extremely common and does not cause damage to the child’s brain. External forces either in utero or after birth cause the skull to flatten in the back. Risk factors include breech position, prolonged labor, twin gestations, and male sex. Physical therapy is prescribed for infants with torticollis to stretch the neck muscles, and these infants are especially at risk for having persistent molding. Repositioning techniques and “tummy time” should be tried initially. If this fails, we work with specialists in the area of helmet therapy to provide an improved head shape and appearance for the child. The bands or helmets are worn for 23 hours a day for an average of 3 to 6 months. **Our neurosurgeons and craniofacial specialist (Dr. Ramon Ruiz) have devoted a clinic to children with abnormal head shapes.** It is crucial that a surgeon with expertise in this area see your child in order to differentiate positional molding from more severe forms of abnormal head shape.

What is craniosynostosis and how is it treated?

A more severe form of abnormal head shape is called craniosynostosis, sometimes associated with certain syndromes (Crouzons, Pfeiffers, and Apert's). These children need early referral to **our Craniofacial Team**. Intracranial pressure can sometimes build up and cause the child symptoms if left untreated. Ramon Ruiz, MD, is a pediatric craniomaxillofacial surgeon has many years of experience in treating such disorders and assists our neurosurgeons with these complex craniofacial operations. **Offering both open and endoscopic approaches to reforming the skull,** we use the latest techniques and imaging guidance to obtain excellent cosmetic results. We pride ourselves on the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children Craniofacial Team, a dedicated group of specialists



