

Skin Checks

Check your child's skin regularly and report any broken skin, or redness that does not go away after bath-time. If you are not able speak with our practitioner, take the helmet off until you speak with us.

To avoid skin problems keep you child in a sitting or upright position as much as possible (high-chair, exer-saucers, etc.). The helmet is in the best position when it floats freely on top of the head without pressure from any side. This will decrease your child's chances of skin problems. Be sure explain the importance of this to all those who take care of your child.

Follow-up Appointments

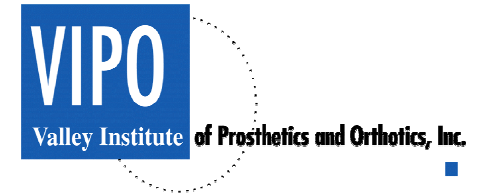
We will ask you to follow-up every 3-4 weeks to check the progress of your child's growth and symmetry. New measurements will be taken and adjustments will be made as needed.

If you think the helmet might need an adjustment, just call us! We would rather spend the time solving the problem over the telephone, or during a follow-up visit, than for your child to not wear the helmet properly. **Helmets that sit by the bed, won't reshape the head!**

We are happy to help you, no matter how big or small you think the problem may be.

VIPO's Mission Statement

To help our patients
realize the fullness of life;
and to be
the Prosthetic & Orthotic
provider of choice
for patients and physicians
by providing the highest quality
of Prosthetic & Orthotic care
to our community.



Helmets

Wear & Care of Helmets for Plagiocephaly



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Plagiocephaly

An infant's head is quite pliable! This allows it to pass through the birth canal and grow quickly during the first year of life. Most babies' heads are a little misshapen at birth and return to a symmetrical shape all on their own by six weeks of age.

By the time an infant is 18-24 months old, fusion of the sutures begins and the head shape becomes more and more fixed. For this reason, abnormal head shape *after six weeks* should be combated with positioning techniques by a Physical Therapist. These techniques are effective up until six months of age.

If additional shaping is still required after six months of age – because the bones that make up the skull are too firm and can only be shaped by a constant external source – a helmet is required.

Plagiocephaly is characterized by an asymmetrical shape that may appear as a flattening on the back of the head, and sometimes a second flattening on the opposite forehead. The unaffected areas may appear pointed, or “bossed.” The overall shape may appear to be like a trapezoid, but definitely asymmetrical.

Brachycephaly is illustrated by a flattening straight across the back of the head, and often with a prominent forehead.

Scaphocephaly is described as long and narrow, common with infants that were in the breech position for an extended period of time or in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

In many of these cases you may notice an asymmetrical face and ear position. Remember that these asymmetries are due to a shifting of the entire head, including the face and ears. The helmet will address the overall shape of the infants head. The face and ears may appear more symmetrical when the head is symmetrical. We have noticed the ears tend to straighten out more overtime.

Causes of Plagiocephaly

The four biggest causes of asymmetrical head shapes are torticollis, multiple births, preterm births, and poor positioning.

Torticollis is the tightening of a neck muscle that occurs during the birthing process. This can be stretched out with physical therapy before and during helmet treatment. Infants that are part of a **multiple birth** (twin, triplets, etc.) are susceptible for two reasons. First, the bottom baby during the pregnancy is tight against the mother's pelvis; and second, they are generally born *preterm*.

Preterm infants are susceptible because they are born early and their bones are much softer.

However, the biggest cause of asymmetric head shape these days is **poor positioning**, related to the “Back to Sleep” program. Many experts have stressed putting babies to sleep on their backs, and there is less emphasis given to putting infants on their stomach to play (supervised tummy time). Infants need “tummy-time” to strengthen neck and back muscles. Babies always put on their backs are prone to flattening on the back of the head (plagiocephaly).

Helmet

Helmet treat asymmetrical head shapes by giving them a symmetrical “form” to grow into. We do not push on the head, they simply grow into it.

Helmet Care Instructions

The helmet must be worn 23 hours a day with 1 hour off for bathing and hygiene. Take the helmet off for bath time. *Never submerge it in water.* Before putting the helmet back on, wipe it clean, inside and outside surfaces, with rubbing alcohol.

Your Child's Comfort

Some redness may initially occur as your infant's skin gets used to the helmet. Be sure to check your child's skin while bathing him/her. Any redness that does not go away by the end of bath-time must be reported.

If your child perspires excessively, remove the helmet for 1 minute, wipe off his head, wipe out the helmet, and place it back on your child. *Do not use powders or lotions.*

If your child gets a fever, remove the helmet and replace it the next day when the fever is gone.

Heat rash is caused by heat and moisture being trapped against the skin. If your child develops a heat rash, *keep her cool and dry.* You can use hydrocortisone or Desitin® ointment *sparingly* on the rash after a bath. It is also helpful to keep your house cool. (We know AC costs can be high. PG&E offers a special “medical baseline” discounted rate. Contact PG&E at 800-743-5000 for details.)