

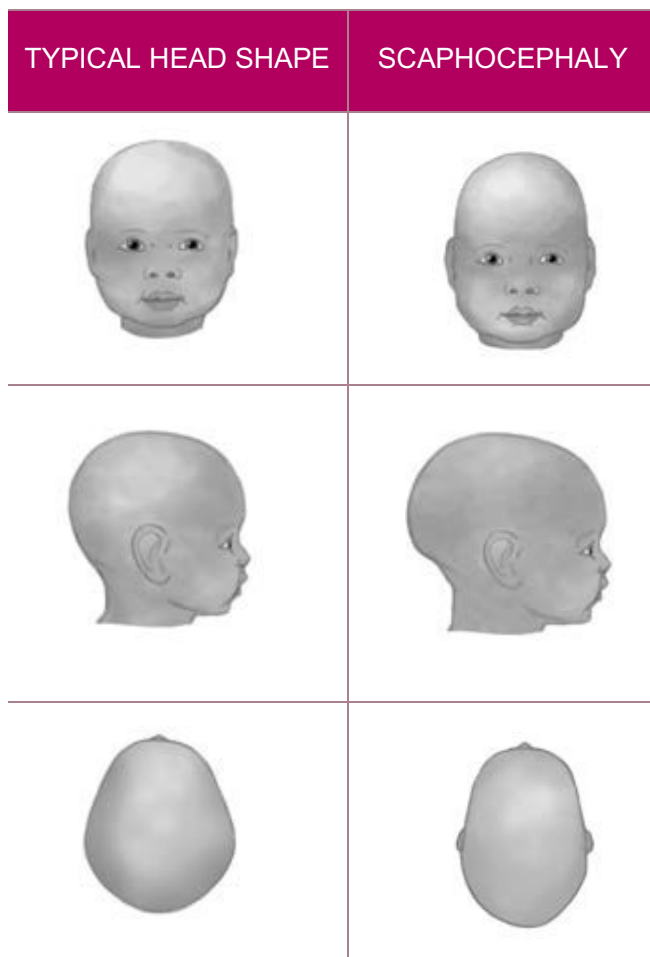


# UNDERSTANDING YOUR BABY'S HEAD SHAPE

As your baby's head is still soft it can mould or change shape if they lie in one position for long periods of time. By following the guidelines in this information sheet, you may help your baby to develop a rounded head shape.

Premature babies may develop a long, narrow head shape. This may be due to lying on their tummy with their head turned to the side or from equipment used in their care. Lying in one position for long periods of time can result a baby's head changing shape.

In some babies, the head can narrow and appear longer from front to back and shorter from side to side. This is called Scaphocephaly.



As babies develop, they are able to spend more time lying on their back and this may help their head to reshape and round at the sides.

Your baby's head will continue to grow quickly and change shape over the first 12 months.

## Looking after your baby's head shape

### In NICU or the Special Care Nursery

Position your baby's head in the middle when they are lying on their back as this can help them to develop a rounded head shape.

If your baby is positioned on their back and their breathing is monitored electronically, you can use a rolled-up cloth nappy to support their head in the midline position for periods of time.

When your baby no longer has electronic monitoring of their breathing these supports around their head need to be removed.

If your baby prefers to turn to one side, position their head to the other side when they are asleep. As your baby is awake more, it is possible to encourage turning to the other side by sitting on the side that you want them to turn to. As they hear your voice and are able to see you, they will be more likely to turn to this side.

### At home

#### When your baby is awake and supervised

Use the following positioning techniques to help your baby develop a rounded, symmetrical head shape:

- Place your baby on the floor or in a bouncinette with rolled-up cloth nappies (or bunny rugs) on each side of their head. This will help keep their head in the middle position. Avoid big rolls and always supervise your baby.
- Use toys to encourage your baby to look in different directions.
- Provide a variety of play positions such as on their tummy and side lying
- Carry your baby or hold them in different positions.

It's important to provide your baby with a variety of positions and avoid too much time in any one position.

### In the cot at bedtime

- Approach the cot from different sides or vary the cot position in the room to encourage your baby to look and turn in different directions to find you.
- Place your baby to sleep at different ends of the cot each night

Remember that sleep time should always follow the Safe Sleeping Guidelines including NO pillows, bumpers or rolled nappies in the cot. You can find Safe sleeping guidelines on the Red Nose website at <https://rednose.com.au/resources/education> or talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse or family doctor (GP).

### If you have concerns

Talk with your GP, paediatrician or your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your baby:

- continually turns to one side and you are unable to assist with steps above
- seems to regularly turn their neck to one side
- is developing an irregular head shape that concerns you, for example, one side of your baby's head may have a flattened area.