

Brachial Plexus Injury in Babies

Information and Exercises

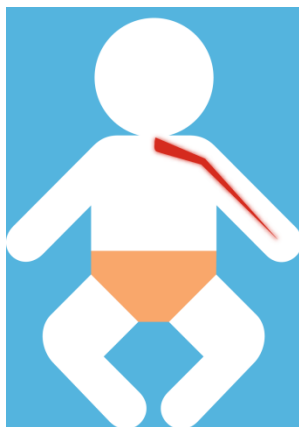
What is the Brachial Plexus?

(sounds like bray-key-al plek-sus)

The 'brachial plexus' is the name given to a group of five large nerves that connect from the spine to the shoulder, arm, and hand. Together, they give movement and feeling to the arm.

How did my baby get this injury?

The nerves can be injured during a difficult birth. During delivery, the head and shoulder are stretched to the point where the nerves are pulled and injured. It results in limited or no movement of the baby's upper arm, lower arm, or hand.



This injury is more likely to happen with a breech delivery, a larger than usual baby, or a difficult delivery of the shoulders after delivery of the head.

For most babies, there are no lasting effects. Your baby's arm movement slowly improves as the nerve heals. Some babies recover within a few weeks. Other babies need more time to get better (can take up to a year).

How to care for your baby's arm

1. Protect your baby's injured arm.
 - When lifting your baby, do not pull on the arm or let the arm dangle or drop.
 - When laying your baby on their back or side, support the injured arm. Keep the arm to the front of the body.
 - When dressing your baby, put the sleeve on the injured arm first. When undressing, take the sleeve off the injured arm last.
2. Increase feeling in the injured arm. Help your baby notice the arm and hand.
 - Touch and gently massage the arm.
 - Rub different textures over the arm.
 - Bring your baby's hand to their face and mouth.
 - Bring your baby's hand to where they can see it during play activities.
3. Maintain movement of your baby's arm
 - A physiotherapist will show you how to do the exercises in this sheet.
 - Do each exercise slowly and gently. Never force a movement.

When doing the exercises:

- At the end of a movement, hold that position for 10 seconds.
- Repeat each exercise 3 times.
- Do all the exercises two times a day, in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening.

Shoulder

Exercise #1



Gently support your baby's arm above the elbow.



Move the arm slowly up over the head. Keep the arm close to the ear. Hold (10 sec.).

Exercise #2



Move the arm out to the side of the body. Bend the elbow. Move the hand down toward the bed.



Move the hand up to the back of the hand touches the bed. Hold (10 sec.).

Exercise #3



Hold the arm at your baby's side. Bend the elbow so the hand is in front of the body.



Turn the arm outward so the back of the hand touches the bed. Hold (10 sec.).

Forearm

Exercise #4



Gently support your baby's arm above the elbow.



Turn the hand so the palm is facing upwards. Hold (10 sec.).

Elbow

Exercise #5



Hold the arm above the elbow and at the wrist with the palm facing upwards.



Move the hand up to the shoulder by bending at the elbow. Hold (10 sec.).

Wrist

Exercise #6



Support the arm above and below the wrist.
Turn the hand so the palm is facing downwards.



Bend the wrist backwards towards the forearm.
Hold (10 sec.).

Fingers

Exercise #7



Support the fingers and thumb.



Straighten the fingers and thumb. Hold (10 sec.).

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If you have questions, contact your physiotherapist.

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.