



# ORTHOKIDS

Children's Bracing and Orthotic Specialists

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## Cranial Remodelling Orthoses (Plagiocephaly Helmets)



Children

KIDS

Specialists

**'Melbourne's most experienced Paediatric Orthotists'**

Main Consulting Rooms: 18 Stirling Crescent, Surrey Hills. VIC. 3127

Also consulting at: 219 Abbotsford St North Melbourne (close to RCH)

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Helmets, or cranial remodelling orthoses, can seem like a daunting proposition for families at first. The following provides some hints on the care of your baby whilst using a helmet to help improve their skull shape.

Remarkably, babies do not mind having a helmet on as long as their sight and hearing is unaffected. Even babies who will not tolerate a hat will not have an issue with a helmet. It should cause no problems for sleeping or moving.

The helmet is designed to cover most of the skull and is specially shaped to allow growth in the areas that are flattened and restrict growth over the "high spots" of the head. The helmet does not squeeze the skull, but uses directed growth to improve the shape. For that reason, if there is no growth, there will be no change in the shape, so treatment can be a bit of a waiting game.

### *Putting the Helmet on, and taking it off*

To put the helmet on:

1. Place your fingers inside the side closure of the helmet and pull the sides apart. There is no chance of breaking the helmet.



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- Slide it over your baby's head and once roughly in position, release the edges slowly.



- Position the helmet so that the ears are in the spaces provided and the front of the helmet is just above the eyebrows.



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- Secure the Velcro closure firmly enough so that the helmet does not move. The edges may not close all the way together.



To remove, undo the Velcro, get your fingers on the edges of the side opening, pull the edges apart and lift the helmet off.

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### *Wearing Time*

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For best results, we recommend the helmet is worn 23 out of 24 hours a day for a period of four to twenty weeks (average time is 12 weeks). The length of time for treatment depends on the severity of your baby's misshapen head, and the amount of growth that occurs. As a general rule, the older the baby, the longer the treatment takes.

### *Introduction to wearing the Helmet*

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The helmet should be introduced over four days with the following regime as a guide:

Day one (day of fitting): 2 hours on, one hour off. When the baby has a sleep, remove the helmet and start again on waking.

Day two: 3 hours on, 1 hour off, remove for sleeps.

Day three: Four hours on, one hour off, continue helmet use through daytime sleeps. Do not use the helmet overnight.

Day four: Full time (23/24 hours) including night-time

This regime allows the baby to become totally at ease with the helmet before using it overnight. These timelines are only a guide. Your baby may take longer to get used to the helmet. We do not recommend rushing the introduction of the helmet, as this can lead to skin breakdown and subsequent delays in wearing the helmet.

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### *Review Appointments*

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The helmet fit and improvement of the head shape will need to be monitored. Depending on age and severity, review appointments will be scheduled between every three to six weeks.

Reviews consist of checking the fit of the helmet, checking skin condition, measuring the head and discussing the treatment. Adjustments are made if necessary on the day.

If you are concerned about an issue with the helmet, a review can be organised as soon as possible, usually within a day or two.



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### *Increase in Temperature*

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Helmets make your baby hot, so it is important to make sure your baby is not overheating. Dress down a layer (maybe leave off a singlet) and monitor sweatiness on the neck and arms. If they are getting sweaty in these areas, they are probably too hot. Also check how hot they feel if your baby is very flushed in the face or becoming lethargic.

If your baby looks like they are getting too hot, remove the helmet and remove a layer of clothing or change to a cooler item of clothing. Re-apply the helmet once they have cooled down back to normal.

All babies get a sweaty head under the helmet, even in winter.

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### *Cleaning your Helmet*

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The best time for an hour off is at bath time. It is vitally important to keep the helmet clean, as skin rashes can develop easily due to moisture and heat retention of the helmet.

The foam on the inside of the helmet doesn't soak up any sweat or water, but it can become smelly and discoloured over time.

Cleaning should consist of giving the inside of the helmet a light scrub with a face washer every time you bath your baby. It is quite ok to fully immerse the helmet in bathwater to wash it out. The helmet can be simply towelled dry.

Antibacterial wipes (scentless) are handy for keeping your helmet clean.

### *Potential Problems*

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#### **Helmet shift**

Most helmets move around a little on the skull in the first few weeks of use. This is due to the space within the helmet into which your baby's head will grow.

A small amount of movement is acceptable, and you may find yourself repositioning the helmet a few times a day.

If the ears are being squashed or the helmet drops consistently over the eyes, an adjustment is needed. Sometimes it is very difficult to stop the helmet shifting and occasionally multiple attempts at rectifying the problem are necessary.

#### **Skin rashes**

Due to moisture and heat retention, the helmet is a great place for the skin's normal bacteria to grow, which can cause a spotty, weepy skin irritation. If this starts to happen, remove the helmet to allow the skin to dry out, wash the hair and disinfect the surface of the foam inside the helmet with an alcohol wipe or other scentless disinfectant that is safe to use against skin. Also let Orthokids know that there is a problem. We see most skin rashes during Spring and Summer.

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### Pressure areas

Pressure marks appear as angry red marks or welts that do not disappear after about an hour after the helmet is taken off. This sometimes occurs if a big growth spurt happens or if the helmet is shifting too far into an incorrect position. If the skin is broken, remove the helmet and call Orthokids. Sometimes we just leave the helmet off until the skin looks better, at other times we will need to adjust the helmet.

### Eyebrow droop

Often with plagiocephaly, the helmet firmly contacts the high spot on the forehead. During normal movements that babies make with their heads, it can tend to push the eyebrow down on that side. If this happens, just release the tension on the skin by undoing the Velcro and lifting the helmet off the forehead. The skin will bounce back. It takes a second to fix.



As a general rule, if you are having any problems, remove the helmet and call Orthokids on 9836 4480.

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