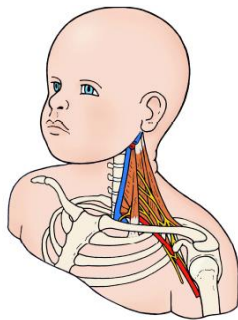


## How does Injury Occur?

Obstetric Brachial Plexus Palsy may occur during a difficult delivery when the nerves from the neck to the arm are stretched or injured. See the **Physiotherapy Patient Information Leaflets** for more detailed information.



**Brachial Plexus:**  
nerves from the neck supplying the arm



Sometimes after the head is delivered  
the shoulder gets stuck

Babies with suspected weakness in their arm are referred for Physiotherapy assessment and will be seen within 10 working days of the referral.

However, '**Early Positioning and Handling**' is important to protect the injured nerves in the neck, to allow any inflammation and swelling around the nerves to recover. This is why no active exercises are taught for the weak arm until 5 days (or 3 weeks if they have a fracture).

This leaflet has important advice for parents and nursing staff in the initial few days, before they may be seen by a Physiotherapist.

## Positioning and Handling

- The arm should be well supported with the hand, elbow and shoulder in the neutral position at all times
- Support arm with a rolled up towel to keep that arm in a neutral position when baby lying on back
- Avoid moving the head and neck too much initially, to avoid pulling on the inflamed nerves

- Keep their baby's arm close to the body when feeding and holding
- Don't be afraid to handle and touch baby's arm with care
- Do not to pull on affected arm or lift the baby under the armpits
- When *dressing* – **start** with **affected** arm
- When *undressing* – **start** with **unaffected arm**
- When bathing hold baby's affected arm close to the body and carefully dry under then arm and in skin folds.

## **Sensation**

The baby may have reduced sensation (feeling) in their arm

Touch will help increase their awareness of their arm, you can do this by:

- Holding baby's hand and gently stroking and massaging the arm
- Rubbing a variety of textures against their skin, e.g. initially soft velvet toys, or a towel that is slightly rougher
- Placing baby's hand on breast or bottle when feeding
- Bringing the baby's hands together and to face, especially their mouth

N.B. Some babies may not tolerate this initially, especially if they are still irritable from their birth.

## **Further Information**

Your Physiotherapist will discuss this information further with you, and advise you how to start exercises when your baby is ready.

Additional information about Brachial Plexus Palsy can also be found at:

[www.erbspalsygroup.co.uk](http://www.erbspalsygroup.co.uk)