

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Crying is a baby's primary mode of communication until language development. Crying not only gets the attention of adults to help fulfill basic needs such as feeding and diapering, but also serves as a way for babies to get close to their parents.

Sometimes the inconsolable crying of a baby, no matter how much that baby is loved, can wear thin the nerves of the most perfect parent. While most people say they would never intentionally harm a baby, 25 to 50 percent of the American public does not know that shaking a baby can cause severe brain or spinal cord damage, blindness, and even death.

Statistics from the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome show that every year in the United States:

- At least 1,200 to 1,400 children are shaken
- 25 to 30% of shaken babies die
- Survivors of shaken baby syndrome are very likely to have lifelong complications, including brain damage and blindness
- Many more children may be unknown victims of shaken baby syndrome, but aren't discovered because no external trauma, such as a bruise, are evident

NO ONE IS IMMUNE FROM SHAKING A BABY!
Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs in families of all races, religions, family composition and socioeconomic status.



What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs when a baby is shaken violently, causing bleeding in the brain. Other associated injuries often include bleeding in the retina of the eye, spinal cord and neck injuries, and rib fractures. Shaking usually takes place when the infant is crying inconsolably and the frustrated caregiver loses control.

Most babies have large, relatively heavy heads with weak, undeveloped neck muscles to support them. If shaken, they have a difficult time controlling the whiplash effect of the rapid back-and-forth motion. Shaken Baby Syndrome is most common in infants under the age of one, but children as old as three or four have been known to suffer from its effects. The injury is almost always accidental. **No child, at any age, should be shaken.**

The symptoms of Shaken Baby Syndrome are: irritability, sluggishness, vomiting, poor appetite, difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness, seizures, not sucking or swallowing, unable to track movement with eyes, not smiling or making sounds.

If you or someone else shakes a baby, either accidentally or on purpose, call 911 or take the child to the emergency room immediately. Bleeding inside the brain can be treated. Immediate medical attention will save your baby many future problems and possibly save the baby's life.

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Prevention

Education is the key to prevention! Educate day care providers, babysitters and family members and any others who may care for the baby.

- Always provide support for the baby's head.
- Never shake a baby or child, whether in play or in anger.
- Do not hold your baby during an argument.
- Contact a local crisis hotline for guidance.
- Consult a counselor and attend parenting classes.
- Do not ignore the signs if you suspect child abuse in your home or the home of someone you know.
- Never shake a baby to make him stop crying or coughing.
- If the baby continues to cry and all needs are met, safely place them in the crib and shut the door. Take a time out. Call a friend or relative. Ask a neighbor to relieve you while you take a quick walk. Turn on the TV or the radio.
- **Walk Away! Never Shake A Baby!**

Plan ahead. Some tips for parents:

- If your baby tends to cry often, make some arrangements for regular child care relief. Get some rest; take care of yourself.
- Talk to a friend, family member, counselor, or health professional.
- Know your caregiver. Never leave your child with someone you don't trust, or someone who has violent reactions.
- Do not hesitate to drop in on your childcare providers.



Ways To Soothe A Crying Baby

- Meet Basic Needs – feed, burp, diaper the baby. Make sure clothing isn't too tight and baby isn't too hot or cold.
- Take the baby for a walk outside in a stroller or for a ride in the car seat.
- Hold the baby against your chest and gently massage the baby.
- Rock, walk, or dance with the baby.
- Be patient; take a deep breath and count to ten.
- Offer a pacifier.
- Lower any surrounding noise and lights.
- Offer the baby a noisy toy; shake or rattle it.
- Hold the baby and breathe slowly and calmly; the baby may feel your calmness and become quiet.
- Sing or talk to the baby using soothing tones.
- Use white noise such as the washing machine, dishwasher, vacuum cleaner, etc.



Kohl's Safety Seconds offers practical safety information about common child safety concerns. Kohl's Safety Seconds are produced through a partnership between Aspirus Wausau Hospital and Kohl's Department Stores, working together to keep children safe.

For more information, call 715-847-2380 or 1-800-847-4707
or visit our website at www.aspirus.com.