

Shaken Baby Syndrome

How To Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

Attempts to comfort your crying baby may not always work. Maybe you tried feeding, burping, diaper changing, rocking or cuddling.

Your baby may cry for no obvious reason. Sometimes, babies have pent-up energy and cry to get rid of it.

If no comforting measures work, try placing your baby on his or her back in the crib. See if your baby can settle down. Check him or her every 5 to 10 minutes. If your baby hasn't settled down in 25 minutes, offer a feeding, check the diaper and restart the comforting process.

If you are angry or frustrated, put your baby safely in his or her crib. Go to another room for five to 10 minutes. If your baby will not stop crying, ask a family member or friend for help. Asking for help does not mean you are weak or a bad parent.

Whom to Call in a Crisis

If you are having a crisis, a crisis nursery can provide 24-hour emergency child care for up to three days. To find a crisis nursery near you, call 1-800-543-7709.

Call your local law enforcement agency if you think a caregiver is abusing your baby. Call 911 if you see a caregiver shaking or abusing your baby or child.

Warning!

Never shake a baby. Shaking causes a baby's brain to move back and forth inside the skull. This can cause serious injury or death.

Never hit a baby. Hitting his or her head on any object (even a soft one) can cause severe damage or death.

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken baby syndrome is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by violently shaking a baby.

Shaking causes a baby's brain to bounce back and forth in the skull. This causes bruising, swelling and bleeding.

A caregiver who becomes angry at a crying baby may take his or her frustration out by shaking the baby to stop the crying. This is child abuse.

Shaking a baby — even for as little as five seconds — can cause brain damage, bleeding in the brain, spinal cord damage or death.

Although shaken baby syndrome injuries usually occur in children younger than 2 years old, children as old as 5 years old can be affected.

Shaken baby syndrome is not caused by gently bouncing a baby, playfully tossing a baby up in the air, jogging with a baby, or putting a baby in a bouncer, swing or other motion-type of baby equipment.

Dangers of Shaken Baby Syndrome

Injuries common with shaken baby syndrome are:

- bleeding on the brain
- brain swelling
- bleeding in the retina of the eyes
- damage to the spinal cord and neck
- broken ribs and bones.

Damage can cause blindness, disabilities (such as cerebral palsy or mental retardation) or death.

Children who survive shaken baby syndrome may need lifelong medical care.

Symptoms of Shaken Baby Syndrome

How bad the symptoms of shaken baby syndrome are depend on how hard the baby was shaken and for how long. Symptoms include:

- extreme irritability
- lethargy
- poor feeding
- breathing problems
- convulsions
- vomiting
- pale or bluish skin.

This fact sheet does not fulfill the mandatory education for shaken baby syndrome required by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Minnesota statute mandates that parents of each newborn baby delivered in a Minnesota hospital view a video on the dangers associated with shaking infants and young children.

This fact sheet is a supplement to reinforce the messages in the video.