

# Health Facts for You Patient/Family Education

## **Shaken Baby Syndrome**

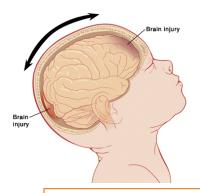
#### What is shaken baby syndrome?

Shaken baby syndrome is the injury or death of a baby or small child from violent shaking. It can also come from being thrown or slammed against a bed mattress or other surface. Brain damage comes from the same forces that cause the bleeding around the brain.

#### What causes it?

When shaken, the head whips back and forth. It can cause bleeding and injury to the brain. Severe damage can cause the baby or young child to die. Injuries can lead to:

- Blindness
- Hearing loss
- Learning and behavior problems
- Cerebral palsy
- Hydrocephalus
- Seizures
- Death



When a baby is shaken or slammed against something, the brain can be injured through violent forces.

### Why does it happen?

Caring for an infant or young child can be very stressful. This is especially true if the infant won't stop crying. All babies cry. It is how they tell you they need something. Sometimes babies cry for no reason and will not stop crying no matter what you try. This can cause a parent or caregiver to be frustrated. It does not mean you are a bad parent or caregiver.

### How can it be prevented?

- Never shake your baby. Even one violent shake can cause serious damage.
- All babies cry. Have a plan in mind if you feel frustrated, angry or unable to take any
  more. Remember, it is more important to stay calm than to stop the crying.
- Make sure anyone caring for your child knows the dangers of shaking. Please share this information with family members, friends, relatives, babysitters and day care providers. Also share it with anyone else who cares for your child.
- Choose caregivers carefully. Do not leave your baby with anyone who has a bad temper or is reckless. Never leave your baby with anyone who is violent, drinks or uses drugs.

#### If your baby is upset

- First, try to soothe your baby:
  - Feed or burp your baby.
  - Hold or rock your baby.
  - Check your baby's diaper.
- Is the baby too warm or too cold?
- Could your baby have a fever, be tired or overwhelmed?
- If you feel frustrated, put your baby down on their back in a safe place. Shut the door and go to a different room for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Call a friend or relative to talk about how you feel.
- Sit down in another room and play music.
- Ask someone you trust to come over for a while to take care of your child.
- Do not hold your baby during an argument or if you are angry.
- If someone who is caring for your infant tells you they are angry or frustrated, respond immediately. Take over and find another caregiver you can trust.
- If you see any bruises on your infant who is not yet able to pull to a stand, get medical care for the infant immediately.
- Call your child's doctor or clinic if you need help. Ask them for help with your child's crying, toilet training, feeding, sleep problems or any other behaviors that frustrate you.
- If you feel angry or out of control, call 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453). This is a free, 24-hour hotline. Or you can call the Parent Helpline at 1-414-671-0566. Trained and caring staff can give you support and advice.

A video about caring for your baby during crying is available at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. If your child is in the hospital, please let your nurse know if you would like to watch it.

## What are the signs of shaken baby syndrome?

Turning pale or blue	Feeding problems and vomiting
Dilated pupils or poor eye movement	Sleepiness and not able to be woken up
Poor sucking or swallowing	Seizures or convulsions
Poor muscle strength or tone	Choking
Fussiness	Breathing problems
High pitched cry	Gasping for air

**Note:** Shaken baby syndrome is not the **only** cause of these signs.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care.

Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.

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