

## Never Shake a Baby

A Baby's Life is in Your Hands

### Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs through the violent shaking of a baby or young child, causing the head to flop back and forth. This whiplash motion can cause the brain to slam against the inside of the skull and tear blood vessels. Brain swelling and internal bleeding from injury causes brain tissue to tear.

Nerve pathways in the brain that are important for learning and normal development are being completed during this stage of a baby's life. SBS can cause severe damage to these pathways that will never be repaired.

Babies under the age of 6 months are at the highest risk of SBS, but it can affect children up to the age of 3, depending upon muscle development. There are an estimated 50,000 cases of SBS each year. Of these 50,000 cases, about 1,200 are reported, and one-fourth of those babies die, making it the leading cause of death due to child abuse.

**SHAKEN  
BABY**  
T a s k F o r c e

Jennie Edmundson Hospital  
933 East Pierce  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

For more information:  
712-396-4200  
[www.safebaby.org](http://www.safebaby.org)

24-hour hotline:  
866-243-BABY



## Innocent Victims

Shaken babies may suffer internal injuries that can result in lifelong disabilities, such as:

- Mental Retardation
- Cerebral Palsy
- Developmental Delays
- Inability to Walk
- Inability to Eat
- Blindness
- Hearing Loss
- Seizures
- Paralysis

And in the most severe cases of Shaken Baby Syndrome, children die.

Some 20–50% of adult caregivers and parents said they did not know shaking a baby could have such terrible effects. Don't be afraid to tell others what you know about Shaken Baby Syndrome.



## Ways to Cope

Caring for a child is a tough job. An adult's frustration from nonstop crying is the number one reason a baby is shaken. Remember, crying is a way to communicate discomforts like:

- Hunger
- Soiled Diaper or Diaper Rash
- Fever
- Teething
- Hair Wrapped around Fingers or Toes
- Too Warmly Dressed

If these basic needs have been met, try the following calming techniques with your baby:

- Gentle Rocking or Walking
- Use a Swing
- Offer a Pacifier
- Soft Music, Singing, Reading or Talking
- Soothingly Rub the Tummy or Back
- Go for a Drive

If the child is still crying and you feel yourself beginning to lose patience, you can distance yourself from the situation:

- Place the baby in a safe place, like a crib, and leave the room.
- Only return to the room when you feel calm.
- Relax, breathe deeply, count to 10, then 20.
- Ask a friend or relative to 'take over' for a while.
- Ask for support from someone who understands the frustration of caring for a crying baby.
- Call the 24-hour hotline at 866-243-BABY(2229).

Crying does not hurt the baby. It's okay to feel overwhelmed, but it's not okay to take that frustration out on a baby. Just a few seconds of violent shaking can change the child's life and yours forever.

## Prevent a Tragedy

A baby shaken in a moment of anger or frustration is shaken with a force 5 to 10 times greater than if the baby had fallen or been dropped. The force has been compared to an adult being shaken by a gorilla.

The effects of shaking a baby can be tragic. You can help prevent a baby from being shaken by following these precautions:

- Provide head and neck support.
- Don't toss a baby into the air.
- Choose childcare providers carefully.
- Observe how a caregiver plays with children, and reacts to fussiness and crying.
- Discuss with your baby's caregivers, family and friends what to do if your baby cries.
- Be available to your baby's caregiver if they start to feel overwhelmed.
- Take a parenting class. Call your local hospital or ask your child's doctor for information.

If you are having a difficult time dealing with the stress of caring for a baby, talk to someone about it (i.e., another parent, caregiver or the child's doctor).

If you or someone else shakes a baby, call 911. Bleeding inside the brain can be treated. Immediate medical attention may save the child from future problems . . . and possibly save a baby's life.

