Shaken Baby Syndrome

Never Shake A Baby – Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Approximately 1,200 to 1,400 children are injured or killed by shaking a baby every year in the United States.* Most of these people could never imagine harming their baby – it was an instantaneous reaction to frustration. Caregivers must be educated about Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS).

• Although it may happen out of frustration, shaking a baby vigorously is a serious form of child abuse.

• A single shaking episode can result in death or other severe injuries such as mental retardation, speech and learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, seizure disorder, hearing loss, partial or total blindness, behavior disorders, cognitive impairment, spinal cord injury, paralysis, broken bones and dislocations.

• Caring for a baby can be difficult and frustrating. Babies cry for many reasons including:
  
  o Hunger
  o Need to be burped
  o Need diaper change
  o Too hot or too cold
  o Fever or pain from earache, teething, rash, or insect bite
  o Need to be held or soothed
  o Overtired
  o Over stimulated
  o Sometimes babies just need to cry!

• If you are frustrated, gently place baby in his or her crib and go to another room for a few minutes until you calm down. Take several deep breaths, count to 100, listen to soft music, exercise, do household chores, or go for a walk (do not leave baby home alone).

• Caregivers must be educated about Shaken Baby Syndrome. Make sure they understand the dangers of shaking a baby. Provide them with the number for an alternate caregiver who can help. Also available is the Child Help USA Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD. Caregivers can speak to a counselor during stressful times through this free, confidential hotline.

• Reassure your caregiver and make them feel comfortable that it is OK to call you at work if baby is inconsolable.

How to Calm A Crying Baby

Step # 1: Try to figure out what is upsetting the baby
Make sure your baby:

- Is not hungry or doesn’t need to burp
- Has a dry diaper
- Is in comfortable clothing
- Is not too hot or too cold
- Is not overtired or overstimulated by playing, noise, or bright lights
- Is not sick or does not have a fever
- Is not in pain

Step # 2: Try to help the baby relax

- Turn down the lights
- Wrap or swaddle the baby securely
- Rock the baby gently
- Offer the breast, a bottle, or a pacifier
- Walk with your baby
- Play some calm music
- Shhh, whisper, sing, or talk quietly to the baby
- Run the vacuum cleaner
- Take your baby for a ride in a stroller or in a car

Step # 3: Keep your baby safe
Sometimes babies cry even after all of these steps are taken. Do not take this personally. Every caregiver needs a plan to deal with a crying baby. If you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, angry, or out of control, then:

- Stop
- Take a deep breath and count to 10
- Place your baby in a safe place, such as a crib or playpen
- Leave the room and shut the door
- Find a quiet place for yourself and take a time out
- Check on your baby every 5-15 minutes
- If you are calm and in control you can repeat step #1 and #2
- Do not be afraid to ask for help

Asking for Help
Keeping your baby safe and asking for help are signs of a good parent. Stop, take time out, and call for help you can:

- Call a friend, relative, or neighbor for support and advice
- Ask another adult to take care of your baby while you take a break
- Call a crisis hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD)
- Call your health care provider

Source: National Association of Neonatal Nurses
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Everyone who cares for a baby or a young child needs to be aware of the serious consequences of child shaking. For more information:

National Center On Shaken Baby Syndrome
(888)-273-0071
www.don’tshake.com
The Shaken Baby Alliance
(877)-6-END-SBS
www.shakenbaby.com