



NEVER SHAKE A BABY!

TAKING CARE OF A SMALL CHILD IS A BIG JOB

BABIES. Just the word suggests warm feelings, tender moments and innocent little people who depend on parents, grandparents, siblings and other caregivers to love and care for them. However, there is another side to caring for a baby or small child that isn't talked about much – the feelings of being frustrated, overwhelmed and alone.

These are normal feelings to have while taking care of a baby. After all, it is a big responsibility for anyone. Many times the stresses of day-to-day life – fatigue, family problems, financial strain and overworking – can make someone reach a breaking point, especially if a baby is fussy and crying for a long period of time. It happens to mothers, fathers, family members, day care providers, friends and even teenagers who are baby sitting for just a few hours a day. Unfortunately, babies and small children are the victims when feelings of frustration result in violent shaking to stop the child from crying.



HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Often frustrated parents or other persons responsible for a child's care feel that shaking a baby is a harmless way to make a child stop crying. Other times, children become victims when a parent or caretaker, not realizing how seriously this behavior can harm, throws a small child vigorously into the air, plays too rough or hits an infant too hard on the back.

The number one reason a baby is shaken is because of inconsolable crying. Almost 25 percent of all babies with Shaken Baby Syndrome die. It is estimated that 25 - 50 percent of parents and caretakers aren't aware of the effects of shaking a baby.

WHAT IS SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME?

When a baby is vigorously shaken, the head moves back and forth. This sudden whiplash motion can cause bleeding inside the head and increased pressure on the brain, causing the brain to pull apart and resulting in injury to the baby. This is known as Shaken Baby Syndrome. A baby's head and neck are susceptible to head trauma because his or her muscles are not fully developed and the brain tissue is exceptionally fragile. Head trauma is the leading cause of disability among abused infants and children.

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs most frequently in infants younger than six months old, yet can occur up to the age of three. Often there are no obvious outward signs of inside injury, particularly in the head or behind the eyes. In reality, shaking a baby, if only for a few seconds, can injure the baby for life. These injuries can include brain swelling and damage; cerebral palsy; mental retardation; developmental delays; blindness; hearing loss; paralysis and death. When a child is shaken in anger and frustration, the force is multiplied five or 10 times more than it would be if the child had simply tripped and fallen.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY?

- ❗ Never shake or throw a baby around. However, gentle play with a baby will not cause these injuries.
- ❗ Always provide support for the baby's head and neck. Don't wiggle or bounce an infant's head.
- ❗ Educate parents, grandparents, caregivers, new parents, baby sitters, teenagers, siblings and licensed child care providers about the dangers of shaking a baby.
- ❗ Choose child care providers and baby sitters carefully. Know how they play with children, and how they will react when the children are upset.

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.

YOU CAN COPE!



Often times babies need attention. **BE PATIENT.** Remember taking care of a baby is a big job. It is all right to feel overwhelmed and frustrated with a crying child. It's not all right to shake a child to stop the crying. You may stop the crying, but also change the child's life (and yours) forever in just one moment of uncontrolled frustration. Here are some nonviolent ways to stop the crying and calm yourself . . .

Place the baby in a safe place, like a crib, and leave the room for a few minutes ☞ Sit down, close your eyes and take 20 deep breaths ☞ Relax! ☞ Play music ☞ Ask a friend or relative to "take over" for a while ☞ Think about how much you love your baby and wouldn't want to do anything to hurt him/her ☞ Don't pick the baby up until you feel calm ☞ Make sure the baby is fed and dry ☞ Feed the baby slowly and burp often ☞ Gently rock or walk the baby ☞ Take the baby for a ride in the stroller or car ☞ Check for signs of discomfort such as diaper rash, teething or fever ☞ Call the doctor if you think the baby is sick ☞ After immunizations, be sure the baby is comfortable and given recommended medications ☞ Put the baby in a windup swing ☞ Make sure the clothing is not too tight or that fingers or toes are not bent ☞ Give the baby a pacifier ☞ Lay the baby tummy down across your lap and gently pat or rub his or her back ☞ Offer a noisy toy or rattle ☞ Hug and cuddle the baby gently ☞ Sing or talk to the baby.



The National Exchange Club Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing, promoting and implementing programs that seek to eliminate child abuse, strengthen families and strengthen Exchange. The Foundation coordinates a nationwide network of child abuse prevention centers, each countering abuse through the parent aide program. It is the goal of the Foundation to educate as many parents, care givers, baby sitters and relatives as possible about Shaken Baby Syndrome. To date the Foundation has helped more than 140,000 children and 100,000 families eliminate abuse from their lives and providing a safe and healthy home environment. If you would like more information, please contact the National Exchange Club Foundation, 800.924.2643.



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Babies are fragile.



Please don't shake a child.
Learn about shaken baby syndrome.