

Never Shake A Baby!

“I was just trying to get her to stop crying.”

Many people don't realize that shaking a baby can cause more damage than hitting her head on a hard surface.

Every year, babies that have been shaken suffer permanent brain damage, blindness, even death.

This abusive head trauma is known as shaken baby syndrome. This happens when a baby's fragile neck is jerked back and forth, and her tender brain smashes inside her skull. It's devastating.

Seek immediate help if you think your child has been injured by shaking.

Symptoms of shaken baby syndrome include:

- Extreme irritability
- Difficulty staying awake/can't be roused
- Breathing problems
- Poor eating
- Tremors or seizures
- Vomiting
- Pale or bluish skin
- Paralysis or coma



Why does it happen?

The stress of caring for a crying baby can cause feelings of frustration, anger and resentment. These feelings are frightening because we think we should always feel love for infants. Sometimes adults shake babies to try to make them stop crying. Remember, it's not just parents who may resort to shaking a baby – it's often babysitters, partners or family members. Realize that it's normal to have mixed feelings about babies when they cry, especially when you cannot stop them from crying. It is important to recognize when you or someone else is having difficulty with comforting a baby and seek assistance.

How to prevent shaken baby syndrome.

Understand why a baby cries.

Babies cry for many different reasons, and **all healthy babies cry**. Babies communicate the only way they know how – by crying. Babies cry when tired, hungry, uncomfortable or sick. They cry when they are bored, over-stimulated or lonely. Some babies even get into a pattern of crying at the same time each day; this is often called “colic.” Sometimes a baby cries despite all your efforts to comfort him. If a baby is still crying and is not hungry, wet, tired, lonely or sick, try some of these tips:

- Hold your baby close to your body and walk.
- Rock him while talking or singing softly or, try an infant swing.
- Sway back and forth, making a shushing sound.
- While sitting, lay your baby face down across your knees, gently patting his back.
- Play quiet music with rhythmic sounds of a heartbeat.
- Take your baby for a ride in the car, or a stroller.
- Try a pacifier or help the baby find his or her thumb to suck.
- If necessary, lay your baby down in his crib and briefly walk away to calm yourself.
- If you have concerns about the intensity or severity of your baby’s crying contact your pediatrician.

Take care of yourself.

- Take a break from time to time, and ask friends or relatives to help.
- Remember to breathe. Taking a few deep breaths can relax you before trying to comfort your baby.
- Talk to someone about your feelings, if you’re tense or frustrated.
- Join a play group or support group.
- Never leave your child with someone you don’t know well or who is inexperienced in caring for babies.
- Share this information with everyone who cares for your child, because babysitters and family members often feel frustrated by persistent crying, too.
- Look for signs of frustration, anger or resentment in those caring for your baby.

For information on how to find quality child care visit va.childcareaware.org.

Your child’s pediatrician should be your primary source of advice about your child’s health.