

Surviving Infant Crying and Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome

What's Happening

All babies cry, some more than others. Babies cry to let you know they need something. The baby is not doing this because he or she hates the parent/caregiver or wants to upset them. Also, know that you may not be able to “fix” the problem right away. This does not mean you are a bad parent/caregiver. Some babies have “persistent crying”, commonly referred to as “colic”. These babies may be more sensitive to stimulation, have difficulty self-soothing or regulating their mood. They are at risk for a form of abuse called Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma.

Remember: Babies will cry less and less as they get older, usually around 3 months of age.

What Is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma (SBS/AHT) is a preventable form of child abuse and neglect that can lead to lifelong injuries or deaths. SBS/AHT cases are almost always parents or caregivers, who shake the baby out of frustration or stress when the little one is crying inconsolably. SBS/AHT results in head injury, and can be caused by direct blows to the head, dropping or throwing the child, or shaking the child.



What happens when a baby is shaken?

- Death
- Learning and Behavioral problems
- Blindness
- Paralysis on one or both sides of the body
- Seizure
- Retardation

Why babies are easily hurt?

- Heavy heads
- Weak neck muscles
- Empty spaces inside their head
- Delicate veins that tear and bleed easily

What You Can Do

Try these tips:

- Provide constant soothing to let your baby know you are there for him/her:
 - ✓ Rocking,
 - ✓ Singing or talk to your baby
 - ✓ Walking in the stroller
 - ✓ Play white noise (vacuum, phone app, hair dryer)
 - ✓ Offer baby a pacifier or toy
 - ✓ Check for signs of illness, like a fever or swollen gums
- Create a plan to manage your frustration. Is there someone who will agree to care for your baby when you need a break? A significant other, family member, friend, or neighbor?
- If you are concerned that your baby is sick, contact your baby's pediatrician.

Remember anyone who may become frustrated is capable of shaking a baby!

If someone is not available to give you a break, place your baby in a **SAFE** place like a crib or bassinet, close the door and check on the baby in 10 minutes.

- ✓ Listen to music
- ✓ Take a nap
- ✓ Take a bath
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Talk to family/friends
- ✓ Watch your favorite tv show or play a game

Resources

24-hour Parent Support Line: 1-888-281-3000

Crisis Nursery: 916-679-3600

Parenting Workshops at Family Resource Centers

Information and Resource Line (916) 244-1906 or thecapcenter.org

Sources: *Baby Behaviors*, WIC/UCDavis Human Lactation Center.

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