

## Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) is a form of child abuse. SBS happens when an infant is violently shaken, usually by the arms, shoulders, or legs. This causes a head injury or trauma. Shaking usually happens when caregivers, like parents, babysitters, or other family members, get frustrated or angry when an infant will not stop crying.

SBS is the leading cause of child abuse deaths in the United States. If SBS does not cause death, then the child usually suffers from permanent problems. Seizures, cerebral palsy, behavior disorders, and impaired physical and mental development can result from SBS. Children of any race, financial status, or background can be victims of SBS. It is very important for caregivers to know that excessive crying is normal behavior in infants and children.

### Signs and Symptoms of SBS

These are some signs and symptoms to look for if you think your child has been a victim of SBS.

#### Early Signs:

- Change in sleep pattern
- Hard to wake child up
- Throwing up (vomiting)
- Bruising on shoulders, arms or legs
- Irritability
- Won't eat or nurse
- Crying that cannot be consoled



It is normal for babies to cry a lot. Gently try to calm your baby.

### Late Signs:

- Child will not respond or wake up
- Breathing problems
- Seizures or shaking (convulsions)
- No heartbeat

### Comforting a Crying Baby

It is very important for caregivers to know that a lot of crying can be normal behavior for infants and children. Sometimes the crying is because of an illness or it may have no cause you can see. See our Helping Hand IV-74, *Calming a Fussy Baby* and HH I-103, *Colic* for more information.

Try these things to comfort your crying baby:

- Nursing or feeding
- Gently rocking
- Gently rubbing his or her back
- Stroller or car rides
- Burping
- Check for tight clothing or wet diaper
- Check for illness or teething

### Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome

Remember, it is okay to walk away if you find yourself getting frustrated or angry with your baby or child. Your baby will not be hurt if he or she continues to cry.

**Gently and safely place your baby in the crib or swing. Make sure you secure any railings or safety belts before walking away. Check on your baby every 5 to 10 minutes.**

These are some things you can do after you have safely placed your child in the crib or swing:

- Call a friend, relative or parent hotline for help and support.
- Ask a friend or family member to come over and watch your child while you take a break.
- Do something to take your mind off the crying.
- Call the doctor if you are worried about your child's crying.

It is important that all caregivers are carefully screened and know how to comfort a baby and prevent shaken baby syndrome. Make sure caregivers have your contact information. Have them call with any questions or frustrations. You may provide this Helping Hand, as well.

## **More Information**

These centers and websites can offer more information and support on Shaken Baby Syndrome:

- Centers for Disease Control and Preventions, [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury)
- National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, [www.dontshake.org](http://www.dontshake.org)
- The Center for Family Safety and Healing, 614-722-8200
- Choices for Victims of Domestic Violence, Franklin County, 614-224-4663
- Franklin County Children Services Child Abuse Hotline, 614-229-7000