

Where **kids** come first

# Please!

## Don't Shake Your Baby



**Shaking  
your baby can cause  
severe injury or even  
death!**



L'Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants  
The Montreal Children's Hospital

Centre universitaire de santé McGill  
McGill University Health Centre

# Why Shaking a Baby Is So Dangerous

Infants and young children have relatively large, heavy heads, weak neck muscles and a brain that is still developing making a baby's brain more prone to injury from shaking.

With shaking, a baby's head wobbles rapidly back and forth and the brain strikes the inside of the skull. The effect is similar to whiplash. The brain may bleed or swell, raising pressure, which can further harm brain tissue. The result may be permanent brain damage. This condition more commonly known as "shaken baby syndrome" is a grave form of abusive head trauma.



Shaking a baby can have serious consequences such as:

- Death
- Spine injuries
- Blindness
- Seizures
- Learning disabilities
- Paralysis
- Broken bones
- Joint dislocations

## The Don'ts

Babies can have fun and benefit from playing but they remain fragile. **DON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES** and remember:

- Don't ever shake your baby.
- Avoid forms of playing with your baby that involve shaking.
- Don't toss your baby in the air.
- Don't vigorously bounce your baby on your knee or swing your baby on your foot.
- Don't spin your baby around.
- Don't swing your baby by the ankles or by the arms.

## The Do's

- Do hold and cuddle your baby to show love.
- Do support your baby's head while holding, playing or transporting your infant.
- Do make sure everyone who handles your baby knows the dangers of shaking an infant.
- Do see a doctor immediately if you suspect your baby has been injured through falling, playing or shaking.

# What To Do When Your Baby Cries

Parents or caregivers who shake a baby generally do not mean to hurt the infant. Sometimes, people get angry or frustrated and they shake their babies to interrupt what seems like endless crying.

Babies often cry as a means of communication. Please be patient and see what your baby needs. Try the following:

- Pick up your baby to offer comfort.
- Check your baby's diaper and change it if it's wet or soiled.
- See if your baby is too hot or too cold.
- Check if your baby is hungry.
- Feed your baby slowly – and burp the infant often.
- Offer your baby a pacifier.
- Take your baby to a quiet room.
- Hold your baby against your chest and walk or rock back and forth.
- Take your baby for a ride in the car or for a walk in the stroller or put the child in a baby swing, making sure your child is properly secured.
- Count to ten and repeat the above steps.

If the crying wears you out or upsets you, take a time out. Separate yourself from your baby for a little while. Put your baby in a crib or another safe place, leave the room and shut the door. Try calling a friend or doing something you find relaxing such as making a cup of coffee or tea, taking a shower, listening to music, reading or sitting down and closing your eyes. If possible, ask someone else to take over comforting your baby. Don't be afraid or ashamed to call for help.



**If you are concerned about your baby's crying or you suspect your baby isn't well, contact your pediatrician, family physician or go to your local medical clinic.**



This information was prepared by the Trauma Programs and the Child Protection Program of The Montreal Children's Hospital of the McGill University Health Center.

## **TRAUMA**

**The Montreal Children's Hospital**

2300 Tupper Street, C-831, Montréal (Québec) H3H 1P3  
514-412-4400, extension 23310

[www.thechildren.com/trauma](http://www.thechildren.com/trauma)



The Montreal Children's  
Hospital Foundation