

Please!

Don't Shake Your Baby



Hôpital de Montréal
pour enfants
Centre universitaire
de santé McGill



Montreal Children's
Hospital
McGill University
Health Centre

TRAUMATOLOGIE TRAUMA

Why Shaking a Baby is so Dangerous

What is shaken baby syndrome?

Shaken baby syndrome is a form of abusive head trauma. It is also known as shaken impact syndrome or intentional head injury. Shaken baby syndrome occurs when a baby or toddler is shaken forcefully, repetitively and/or is thrown against an object causing injury to the brain.

What causes shaken baby syndrome?

Infants and toddlers have relatively large, heavy heads, weak neck muscles and a brain that is still developing. This makes a baby's brain more vulnerable to injury from being shaken forcefully.

A parent or caregiver can become frustrated with a baby's constant crying and may respond by shaking the baby. With forceful shaking, a baby's head wobbles rapidly back and forth and the brain repeatedly strikes the inside of the skull. The brain may bleed or swell, which may result in **permanent brain damage or death**.

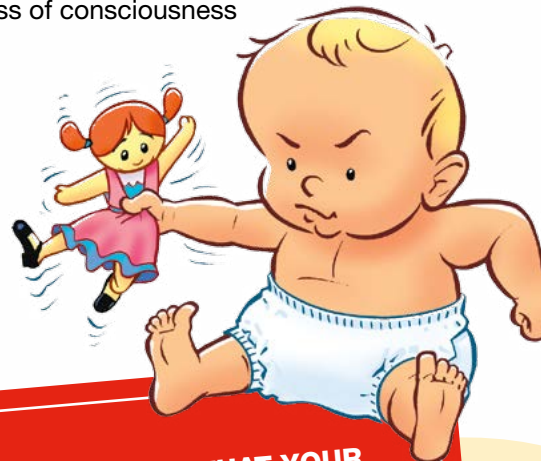
**MOST AT RISK:
CHILDREN LESS THAN
1 YEAR OLD.**

Shaking a baby can result in serious consequences such as:

- Blindness
- Paralysis
- Seizures
- Developmental problems
- Learning disabilities
- Spine injuries
- Death

Signs which may indicate that your baby has been shaken:

- Irritability or unusual sleepiness and lethargy
- Limp body
- Poor feeding or vomiting for no apparent reason
- Seizure
- Difficulty breathing
- Eyes roll back
- Loss of consciousness



**IF YOU SUSPECT THAT YOUR
BABY HAS BEEN SHAKEN, CALL
911, OR GO TO AN EMERGENCY
DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY.**

Why do Babies Cry?



Babies often cry as a means of communication. They may be hungry, cold, tired, bored, in need of a diaper change or in pain.

Some babies cry more than others. Sometimes a baby will continue to cry even after you have tried everything to calm him/her down.

A baby's crying pattern increases in the first month, peaks in the second month and usually decreases by 4 months of age.

Crying is not usually related to health issues. However, if your baby has a fever or diarrhea, is vomiting or has other concerning symptoms, consult a health-care professional.

(R. Barr et al, (2009) Do educational materials change knowledge and behaviour about crying and shaken baby syndrome? A randomized controlled trial, CMAJ, 180(7) 727-733)

What to do when your baby cries

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

Try the following:

- Pick up your baby to offer comfort.
- Check your baby's diaper and change it if it is wet or soiled.

- Verify if your baby is too hot or too cold.
- Check if your baby is hungry. Feed your baby slowly - and burp him/her often.
- Offer your baby a pacifier to soothe him/her.
- Take your baby to a quiet room to calm him/her.
- Hold your baby against your chest and walk or gently rock back and forth.
- Some babies calm with motion: Take your baby for a ride in the car or for a walk in the stroller or put the child in a baby swing, always ensuring your child is properly secured.
- Play soft music.
- Read a story.

What to do if your baby keeps crying

It is not unusual that your baby's persistent crying may frustrate or upset you. This does not make you a bad parent.

Here are some suggestions to help you:

- Take a time out. Gently place your baby in a crib or another safe place. Leave the room and shut the door.
- Call a friend or relative for assistance.
- Take a shower.
- Listen to music or read.
- Close your eyes and take deep breaths.

WHEN POSSIBLE, ASK SOMEONE TO TAKE OVER COMFORTING YOUR BABY. DON'T BE AFRAID OR ASHAMED TO CALL FOR HELP.

DO'S

Babies benefit from feeling loved, protected and consoled.

- Do hold and cuddle your baby to show love and make them feel secure.
- 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 or toddler.
- **Do seek immediate medical attention if you suspect your baby has been injured through falling, playing or shaking.**

DON'TS

Babies can have fun and benefit from playing, however, they are fragile.

DON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES

- Don't ever shake your baby.
- Don't toss your baby in the air.
- Don't spin your baby around.
- Don't swing your baby by the ankles or arms.

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