



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Never, Never Shake a Baby

Shaking a baby can result in serious injury that is known as shaken baby syndrome. This often occurs when an adult, or even an older child, becomes upset and frustrated and shakes an infant forcefully. Although some may consider shaking appropriate punishment, even mild shaking may cause unintended, serious damage. Young infants' neck muscles are not strong enough to support their heads. When babies are shaken, their heads rapidly wobble back and forth. This can cause brain damage.

In addition to intentional shaking, infants and young children can be hurt during playful activities that may seem harmless to an adult. These activities include jogging while carrying an infant on the shoulders or back, spinning a young child around or swinging the child around by the ankles, repeatedly tossing an infant or young child in the air, and playing games like "riding a horse" (sitting on the swinging foot or bouncing knee of an adult).

How is a child with shaken baby syndrome hurt?

Infant victims of shaken baby syndrome often have brain damage. Brain damage can also occur in children as old as four. This can result in blindness or other eye trauma, seizures, impaired motor and sensory skills, and mental retardation. Other injuries include spinal injury and paralysis, broken bones, and dislocated joints.

How can I prevent shaken baby syndrome?

- Learn what to do if your baby won't stop crying.
- Identify who can give you support and a break if caring for your baby seems overwhelming.
- Always make sure that you and others who care for your infant support your baby's head.
- Avoid activities that jerk your baby's or young child's head.

What should I do if I or someone else has shaken my baby?

Immediately take your baby to an emergency department and report what happened. Even though you may feel guilty or embarrassed, it is important to have your baby evaluated for any injuries. This could save your baby from future problems and may even save your child's life.

For more information about shaken baby syndrome contact

National Information, Support and Referral Service on Shaken Baby Syndrome, 2955 Harrison Blvd., #102, Ogden, Utah 84403. Telephone: 1-888-273-0071 or log on to www.capcenter.org

A resource for families living in Onondaga County

In Syracuse, Lucy's House provides support for stressed parents Monday through Friday from 5 to 9 PM. Call 476-3157 for more information.

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