

# Shaken Baby Syndrome

**Shaking a baby is child abuse. Never, never shake a baby.**

## Did you know?

- Most often, babies are shaken because caregivers get frustrated and upset when the baby won't stop crying. Thousands of children are hospitalized every year just for crying.
- Shaking a baby causes bruising, swelling and bleeding in the brain.
- This can lead to permanent, severe brain damage, or death.
- Less than 15% of shaken babies recover completely. Most of the babies that live have permanent disabilities. One in four babies dies.

**What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?** Shaken Baby Syndrome describes the injuries babies and very young children sustain from being violently shaken. It is a severe form of head injury.

The baby or young child is usually held by the arms and shaken back and forth in quick, jerky motions. The shaking is violent and is an average of 2-4 shakes per second and lasts from 4-20 seconds. Often, after the baby is shaken, she or he will be thrown on the floor, a couch, or a bed.

## 5 Techniques to Calm a Crying Baby (and Yourself!)

1. **Never Yell At, Hit, Or Shake A Baby!** Remain calm. Crying is normal. Babies cry an average of 3 hours per day. This is how they communicate.
2. Check to see if she is hungry or needs a new diaper, or is too hot or cold. Are her clothes too tight? Check to see if she has a fever. Call the doctor for advice.
3. **T.L.C.** – provide tender, loving care: Soothe him with gentle motions and a steady, calm voice. Try running the vacuum cleaner (babies like the low hum), or take him for a stroller or car ride. Hold him and rock or walk.
4. Give yourself a **time out** – put him in a crib or playpen and safely release your anger and frustration. Put your hands behind your back if you become angry. Take a hot bath, call a friend, or ask someone you trust to stay with the baby. You do not have to stay next to him when he cries, just check on him regularly.
5. Call the **Parental Stress Hotline** (anyone can call): 1-800-632-8188.

## For more information

- **If a baby is unconscious or very difficult to wake up**, call 911.
- **If you suspect child abuse**, notify the Department of Social Services' child-at-risk hotline: 1-800-792-5200.
- **About EEC regulations**, call your licenser or EEC at (617) 988-6600 or visit the EEC website at <http://www.mass.gov/eec>

Send this page home to your children's parents!

