

Never shake the baby

Your baby and crying

All babies fuss and cry. Some babies cry more than others. Whether your baby cries a little or a lot, you will want to do your best to comfort him or her.

Taking care of a baby...a big job!

The word baby suggests warm feelings and tender moments. There can, however, be another side to taking care of a baby that is not talked about much—feelings of being frustrated, alone, and overwhelmed. If you have ever felt this way while taking care of a baby, be assured that it is perfectly normal.

Taking care of a baby is a big responsibility

- Maybe the baby has been crying a lot, and you cannot figure out why
- Maybe you are just plain tired and at the end of your rope

While it is OK to feel upset, it is never OK to shake a baby.

Shaking a baby can kill

Babies who suffer injury or death from violent shaking are victims of Shaken Baby Syndrome. It happens when adults take out their anger or frustration on babies by shaking them. Because babies have weak neck muscles and heavy heads, even a few seconds of violent shaking can cause serious damage to them.

Injuries from Shaken Baby Syndrome include:

brain damage
mental retardation
seizures
blindness
paralysis
death

Shaking a baby is child abuse

Tell the people who care for your baby

Looking after a baby is a full time job. Add the stresses of day to day life—fatigue, family problems, financial problems and stress and it is easy to see how someone can be distressed when a baby is being fussy. It happens to mothers, fathers, family members, day care providers and friends and teenagers who are looking after children for only a few hours. Unfortunately, the baby is the one who gets hurt.

If you are a parent, then you should know the dangers of shaking. You need to tell everyone who cares for your child that **it is never OK to shake a baby.**

When do babies cry?

Babies usually cry because they need something. Normal babies cry when they are

- hungry
- tired
- wet
- uncomfortable

Healthy babies may cry up to two or three hours a day. A baby with colic may cry all day long. Sometimes your baby just wants to be picked up and held.

Things to try

- give the baby a bottle of boiled water after it has been cooled
- gently rub the baby's tummy
- offer a pacifier—sucking is a comfort
- walk or rock the baby snuggled up close to your chest so the baby can feel your heartbeat
- take the baby for a walk in the fresh air
- sing or talk to your baby
- wrap the baby in a soft blanket
- call a friend or relative to talk about your frustration or see if they can relieve you for a while

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Children's Aid Society
LONDON & MIDDLESEX
La Société d'aide à l'enfance

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My baby does not stop crying!

If you have tried everything you can think of and the baby is still crying, wrap the baby in a soft blanket and put the baby in the crib on his/her side. Shut the lights out and leave the room. Give yourself some time to calm down. Letting the baby "cry it out" is much safer than shaking or punishing.

Although it is normal for babies to cry, changes in the way your baby is crying may be important. Pay attention if your baby

- cries constantly
- cries louder than usual
- throws up

If you are worried about crying or your baby's health, contact your doctor. If the doctor is not available, contact your local Public Health Unit.

Even the most patient of parents can get nervous or angry when their baby continues to fuss and cry despite their best efforts. They may even feel like shaking or hitting the baby...if you feel this way

- take a break from the baby
- hand him/her to someone else
- put the baby in the crib if there is no one there to help

Your feelings of anger and frustration are normal, but, you must not take them out on your baby.

Many childhood injuries heal, but a head injury can leave your child handicapped for life.

Make sure that anyone who cares for your baby is aware of the dangers of shaking.

Why you must never shake your baby

If you shake your baby, his/her head will jerk backward and forward. The baby does not have the strength to stop this from happening.

A baby's head is quite large compared to its body and its neck is very weak. This is why it is so important to support a baby's head when picking it up and putting it down.

A baby's brain is very fragile. When it hits the skull as you shake the baby, it begins to bleed. If it bleeds too much, pressure will build up and the baby could go into a coma and die.

Children under 11 months of age are particularly at risk. Older children can also be hurt if they are shaken hard. Even tossing a baby in the air or swinging a baby with an unsupported head can hurt the baby badly.

Shaking can frighten a baby. Not only can this hurt the baby, but the baby can be so frightened, that he/she may cry even harder.

need help? contact the Children's Aid Society

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