

PREVENTING Shaken Baby Syndrome

What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

Shaken Baby Syndrome describes the serious injuries that can occur when an infant, toddler, or child is shaken. They have heavy heads and weak neck muscles, causing the delicate brain to move back and forth inside the skull. This can cause injury to the brain, spine, eyes, and bones.

What Happens When a Baby is Shaken?

Shaking can lead to serious injuries such as: cerebral palsy, blindness, damage to the spinal cord (paralysis), delayed development, seizures, fractures, learning disabilities and/or mental retardation. An infant, toddler or child who is shaken may die as a result of his or her injuries.

Why Does It Happen?

Shaken Baby Syndrome usually occurs when an adult loses control and shakes a baby. "Losing it" could happen to anyone, especially when the baby has been crying a lot. Shaken Baby Syndrome is entirely preventable!

Normal Crying

Crying is a normal, everyday activity in the lives of babies. Some infants cry very little while others cry a lot. Not every baby is easy to calm. Crying is the only way babies have to communicate their needs. They might cry when they are hungry, lonely, tired or when their diaper needs to be changed. While crying is a normal part of every baby's day, crying can also mean that your baby is sick or in pain. If you think this is the case, it is important to contact your pediatrician.

What To Do When Your Baby Cries

If you have checked for all of the reasons why a baby might cry and your baby is still crying, you can try some of these suggestions:

- Rub her back or stroke her head as you count slowly out loud.
- Let him listen to a repeating sound, such as a clothes dryer.
- Walk outdoors with her.
- Gently rock him in your arms or walk with him against your shoulder.
- Hum or sing to her.
- Try a pacifier, or help him find his thumb to suck on.
- Put her in a car seat and take a car ride.
- Carry him in a "snuggly".

If Crying Is Getting To You

Stop

Place the baby in a comfortable and safe place, such as a crib or play pen, and walk away. It is okay to let your baby cry while you calm down. Crying won't cause brain damage or harm your baby in any way.

Relax

Walk outside for a couple of minutes or go into another room where the crying is not so loud. Sit down and take ten deep breaths. Listen to music, take a shower or do something physical.

Take a break

If possible, call a trusted friend, neighbor, or family member to help you for a while so you can take a little break.

How To Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

Share this brochure with all people who help you care for your baby, including any family member, any babysitter, or any childcare center. Remind everyone to **never, never, never shake a baby!**

Identify a trusted friend, relative, or neighbor who can lend a hand when times get tough. Talk to this person, and let him or her know you may call for help.

Asking for help is a GOOD thing!

Parent Helpline
1-800-342-7472

*From anywhere in New York State,
24 hours a day, 7 days a week,
English & Spanish*

The
Hudson
Valley
Shaken Baby
Prevention
Initiative

Participating Hospitals

Benedictine Hospital
Bon Secours Community Hospital
Catskill Regional Medical Center
Northern Dutchess Hospital
Good Samaritan Hospital
Hudson Valley Hospital Center
Kingston Hospital
Lawrence Hospital
Northern Westchester Hospital
Nyack Hospital
Orange Regional Medical Center—Arden Hill
Orange Regional Medical Center—Horton
Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center
Phelps Memorial Hospital Center
Putnam Hospital Center
Sound Shore Medical Center
St. Anthony Community Hospital
St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital
St. John's Riverside Hospital
Vassar Brothers Medical Center
Maria Fareri Children's Hospital
at Westchester Medical Center
White Plains Hospital

About Our Program

The Hudson Valley Shaken Baby Prevention Initiative is a partnership of 22 hospitals within 8 counties of the Hudson Valley Region of New York. The goal of the project is to reach the parents of every newborn within the region with information about shaken baby syndrome and how to prevent it. Leadership for this program is through Maria Fareri Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center with grant support from the William B. Hoyt Memorial Children & Family Trust Fund of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

The Hudson Valley Shaken Baby Prevention Initiative is most grateful to the SKIPPER Program, for inspiration and collaboration with this project.

*For additional information,
please contact:*

**The Hudson Valley
Shaken Baby
Prevention Initiative**
Maria Fareri Children's Hospital
at Westchester Medical Center
914-493-7235



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*A Guide for
Parents*