

# Never Shake a 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 is 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** okay 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, blindness, mental retardation, paralysis, seizures, and death.

### *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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## **When do babies cry?**

Babies usually cry because they need something. Normally, babies cry when they are hungry, tired, wet, or uncomfortable. Healthy babies may cry for 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.

## **My baby does not stop crying!**

If you have tried everything you can think of and the baby is still crying, place the child safely in their crib. Shut off the lights 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, or throws up. If you are worried about crying or your baby’s health, contact your doctor.

Even the most patient parents can get nervous or angry when their baby continues to fuss. They may even feel like shaking or hitting the baby. If you feel this way take a break from the baby, hand them to someone else, or put them in their crib.

## **Why must you never shake your baby?**

If you shake your baby, their 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.

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.