

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken baby syndrome is a serious brain injury resulting from forcefully shaking an infant. Shaking an infant usually occurs when a parent or guardian becomes frustrated because the infant will not stop crying, but it may also occur if a baby seems indifferent and will not make eye contact. Shaking an infant causes the fragile brain to bump against the skull causing bruising, swelling, pressure, and bleeding in and around the brain. This type of head trauma can also occur to a toddler (ages 1-3). Shaking an infant or toddler can lead to mental retardation, brain damage, seizures, blindness, or death. **NOTE:** Bouncing a baby on your legs, swinging him, or tossing him gently in the air will not cause shaken baby syndrome. Shaken baby syndrome only occurs if a baby is violently shaken in a back and forth motion.

Symptoms

- lethargy
- irritability
- vomiting
- poor sucking or swallowing
- decreased appetite
- lack of smiling or vocalizing
- rigidity
- seizures
- difficulty breathing
- blue color due to lack of oxygen
- altered consciousness
- unequal pupil size
- an inability to lift the head
- an inability to focus the eyes or track movement

Treatment for Shaken Baby Syndrome

Treatment for a baby who has head trauma from being shaken usually includes many life sustaining measures. Surgeries and different kinds of life support may be needed. The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome says more than 300 babies die each year from being shaken.

How to Deal With a Crying or Unresponsive Baby

1. **Know your limits.** Focus on how you feel. Dealing with an inconsolable baby is overwhelming, and this is what normally leads to something like shaking the baby. If you are feeling stressed, take a break. Leave the room for a few minutes and calm down.
2. **Call a family member.** Talking about your feelings with someone close can help keep your mind level.
3. **Find support.** Ask family to help watch the baby or help with other duties. Do not try to take too much on because it will only worsen your frustration with your child.



Sometimes a baby cries for no reason. If your baby is crying and is inconsolable after trying to feed, change, or help him/her sleep, try to take these steps:

- Give your baby something to suck on like a pacifier or finger.
- Swaddle your baby to recreate the feeling of being in the womb. This will provide comfort.
- Play music or sing a lullaby. You may have to experiment with different types of music to see what genre your baby responds to best.

- Use white noise. White noise is noise from things like a vacuum cleaner, running water, or a fan. This may resemble the type of whooshing sounds heard in the womb.
- If the weather is permitting, take your baby out for some fresh air.
- Try rocking your baby in a swing, rocking chair, or just in your arms. Some babies are soothed by a rocking motion.
- If nothing works, your baby may be sick. Take your baby to the doctor if he/she is constantly fussy and crying.

Remember, there is a Period of Purple Crying.

This period refers to a time when a baby will be especially fussy and resist soothing. Babies are more likely to cry during this time than any other time. It is a completely normal period for all babies. Many times a baby can cry for hours but still be healthy and normal. See the picture below from The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome to see exactly what the Period of Purple Crying is:

THE LETTERS IN PURPLE STAND FOR

P	U	R	P	L	E
PEAK OF CRYING	UNEXPECTED	RESISTS SOOTHING	PAIN-LIKE FACE	LONG LASTING	EVENING
Your baby may cry more each week, the most in month 2, then less in months 3-5	Crying can come and go and you don't know why.	Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try.	A crying baby may look like they are in pain, even when they are not.	Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more.	Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

THE WORD PERIOD MEANS THAT THE CRYING HAS A BEGINNING AND AN END

Cite: Barr, Marilyn. "What Is the Period of PURPLE Crying?" *What Is the Period of PURPLE Crying?* National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome. Web. 15 Aug. 2015. <<http://purplecrying.info/what-is-the-period-of-purple-crying.php>>.

NEVER SHAKE YOUR BABY.

At Any Time, You Can Call the Following Numbers For Help:

- 24-Hour Parent Helpline: 1-888-435-7553
- Crying Baby Hotline: 1-866-243-2229
- Fussy Baby Warmline: 1-888-431-BABY