

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Never Shake a Baby

## Shaken Infant Syndrome

### Why shouldn't I shake a baby?

Shaking a baby is very dangerous. It can cause blindness, learning problems, brain damage or death.

### Shaking is dangerous?

Yes. Shaken infant syndrome often happens when adults become frustrated, angry, or upset with children, and shake them. It often happens when the baby or child will not stop crying.



**Shaking may seem harmless,  
but it is very dangerous.**

Shaking may seem harmless, but it is very dangerous.

### What happens when you shake a baby?

Babies are born with heavy heads and very weak neck muscles. Their neck muscles get stronger over their first four to five years.

Our brains are soft, and are protected by our hard skulls. When children are shaken, their heads toss back and forth. The soft brain bounces inside the skull. If shaken hard enough, the brain could bruise or bleed. This hurts the brain, and can cause blindness, learning problems, brain damage, or death. This usually happens with small babies, but even three and four year-olds can be hurt this way.

## What if my baby won't stop crying?

Babies can only tell you what they need or feel by crying. Many babies cry for 2 hours a day, some cry even more. Caring for a crying infant can be hard. It's even harder when you are tired or overwhelmed. Here are some things to check and ways to calm your crying baby:

- Is your baby hungry? Does your baby need to be burped? Feed your baby slowly, burping often. If you are breast feeding, your baby may be upset by the onions, broccoli, or beans, you eat or coffee, tea, cola, or alcohol you drink.
- Does your baby need to be changed?
- Is your baby too cold or too hot?
- Is your baby tired? Turn down the lights and lower the noise. Wrap the baby in a blanket and hold him, or put him in the crib.
- Does your baby need to suck? Give your baby a pacifier, or help him find his finger to suck.
- Does your baby have a fever or seem to be sick? Call the doctor if you think your child is sick or in pain.
- Does your baby need attention? Your baby may want to be held, carried, rocked, or patted gently. Hold your baby in a different way. Talk softly or sing to your baby. Turn on soft music. Take the baby for a walk. Put your baby in a car seat, and go for a ride.

Sometimes babies just need to cry. What do you do if you've tried everything, your baby still cries, and you feel yourself getting upset? Make sure your baby is safe and comfortable, and leave the room. Check on your baby every few minutes. It is better to let your baby cry, than it is to yell, hit, or shake.

It is not easy to take care of babies. Make sure all the people who take care of your baby also take good care of themselves.

- Eat right, get plenty of rest and exercise. Do not use alcohol or drugs.
- Take time for yourself. Do things you think are fun.
- Ask for help. Tell people who care about you how you feel. Let family and friends help you.
- Now that you have a baby, you may have less time to do all the things you used to do. What can you stop doing? Who can help you with the things that need to be done? Life is different, now that you have a baby.

- Relax. Exercise, write in a journal, listen to music, draw, laugh.
- Let your anger out in a safe way. To calm down, exercise, take a bath or shower, clean the house, take slow, deep breaths, or count to 100.
- Ask your baby's doctor or nurse how you can better deal with problems in feeding, crying, toilet training, sleep, or tantrums.
- Talk to someone. If you feel out of control call a friend or the National Parent Helpline at 1-855-427-2736 or the Fussy Baby Program at 877-705-5437.

### Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor what you would do if you feel like shaking your baby.  
(Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

- call your child's doctor or  call \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-933-1400  
866-933-6459  
[www.phoenixchildrens.org](http://www.phoenixchildrens.org)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://www.facebook.com/theemilycenter)  
Twitter: @emilycenter  
Pinterest: [pinterest.com/emilycenter](https://www.pinterest.com/emilycenter)

**Disclaimer**

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

Thursday, December 3, 2015 • DRAFT to family review  
#124 • Written by Melani Jaskowiak, BSN, RN and Janet Harmon, CISW • Illustrated by Dennis Swain

# Never Shake a Baby: Shaken Infant Syndrome

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db

## Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center  
Health Education Specialist  
Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

**Thank you for helping us!**