



St. Clair County
Child Abuse and Neglect Council
"It shouldn't hurt to be a child".



Never Shake A Baby

"I was just trying to get him to stop crying."

Many people are not aware that shaking a baby can be extremely harmful. Each year, thousands of children are seen in emergency centers as a result of being shaken. It may only take 1 or 2 hard shakes to seriously injure a small child because babies and toddlers have relatively big, heavy heads and weak neck muscles. When they are shaken, the brain slams back and forth inside the skull, resulting in bleeding around the brain and damage to the brain itself. Some babies may even stop breathing, which can cause further brain damage.

Seek immediate help if you think your child has been injured by shaking.

- Extreme irritability
- Difficulty staying awake/can't be roused
- Breathing problems
- Poor eating
- Tremors or seizures
- Vomiting
- Pale or bluish skin
- Paralysis or coma

Why does it happen?

The stress of caring for a crying baby can cause feelings of frustration, anger and resentment. These feelings are frightening because we think we should always feel love for infants. Sometimes adults shake babies to try to make them stop crying. Remember, it's not just parents who may resort to shaking a baby – it's often babysitters, partners or family members. Realize that it's normal to have mixed feelings about babies when they cry, especially when you cannot stop them from crying. It is important to recognize when you or someone else is having difficulty with comforting a baby and seek assistance.



How to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Understand why babies cry.

Babies cry for many different reasons, and **all healthy babies** cry. Babies communicate the only way they know how – by crying. Babies cry when tired, hungry, uncomfortable or sick. They cry when they are bored, over-stimulated or lonely. Some babies even get into a pattern of crying at the same time each day; this is often called “colic.” Sometimes a baby cries despite all your efforts to comfort him. If a baby is still crying and is not hungry, wet, tired, lonely or sick, try some of these tips:

- Hold your baby close to your body and walk.
- Rock him while talking or singing softly or, try an infant swing.
- Sway back and forth, making a shushing sound.
- While sitting, lay your baby face down across your knees, gently patting his back.
- Play quiet music with rhythmic sounds of a heartbeat.
- Take your baby for a ride in the car, or a stroller.
- Try a pacifier or help the baby find his or her thumb to suck.
- If necessary, lay your baby down in his crib and briefly walk away to calm yourself.
- If you have concerns about the intensity or severity of your baby’s crying contact your pediatrician.

Take care of yourself.

- Take a break from time to time and ask friends or relatives to help.
- Remember to breathe; a few deep breaths can relax you before trying to comfort your baby.
- Talk to someone about your feelings, if you’re tense or frustrated.
- Join a play group or support group.
- Never leave your child with someone you don’t know well or who is inexperienced in caring for babies.
- Share this information with everyone who cares for your child, because babysitters and family members often feel frustrated by persistent crying, too.
- Look for signs of frustration, anger or resentment in those caring for your baby.

Contact Us

For more information or to schedule or sign-up to participate in a Never Shake A Baby workshop, please contact St. Clair County Child Abuse and Neglect Council by phone at: (810) 966-9911.