



## April is National Child Abuse Month



Shaken baby syndrome (SBS) or abusive head trauma is a form of child abuse. Shaking a baby can cause permanent brain damage, cerebral palsy, blindness, learning and behavior problems, seizures, paralysis, and even death.

Shaken baby syndrome occurs most commonly with children younger than 1 year of age. Shaken baby syndrome can affect children up to 5 years old. When a child is shaken or thrown, it causes a backward and forward head motion causing brain tissue, blood vessels, and nerves to tear. Very young children are at higher risk because their neck muscles are weaker, they have delicate blood vessels in their brains, and a large head for their body size.

Symptoms of shaken baby syndrome include extreme irritability, rigidity, extreme sleepiness, seizures, decreased appetite, dilated pupils, vomiting, blood spots in eyes, poor muscle tone, or coma. If you think that your child has been shaken you must seek medical care immediately.

Crying does not mean that your baby is being bad, does not like you, or is angry with you. It is their primary means of communication. Sometimes babies just need to cry. If your baby is crying uncontrollably check to see if they are hungry, need a diaper change or are too hot or cold. Check to see if the baby is sick, maybe they have a fever and need medical attention. Have you tried rocking, singing to or burping your baby? Take your baby for a car or stroller ride. If none of these work take a break. Place your infant in a crib or playpen, someplace safe, and count to ten taking deep breaths. You can call your babies doctor if you think they are sick. Call a friend for support.

You can keep your baby safe by never shaking a baby. Always support your babies head and neck when holding and rocking your baby. Always be sure that everyone that cares for your baby knows to

**Never Shake a Baby.**

