

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

In the past few years a newly recognized injury to infants and older children has been identified and described as the "shaken infant syndrome." This is a serious injury and the results can be devastating. It can cause life-long disabilities and it has a 25% fatality rate.

Usually, shaken infant syndrome occurs when adults become frustrated and angry with their baby and shake the infant strenuously. Most people are not aware of how seriously this can hurt a child.

Many responsible parents with good intentions who would never dream of hitting their child, think nothing of giving a small infant a good shaking. While such punishment is generally considered harmless, the effects of a shaking can be far more grave than anyone could ever realize.

Young infants have very weak neck muscles and only gradually develop the strength to control their heavy heads. If they are shaken, their heads wobble rapidly back and forth, which may cause brain damage and bleeding in and on the surface of the brain (injury can occur even if the head is supported while shaking the infant). Severe damage of this type is most common in very young infants, but it has happened to even three- and four-year-olds.

NEVER shake a baby. Did you know that:

1. Head trauma is the leading cause of disability and death among infants and children?
2. Violent shaking is involved in many of these cases?
3. 25-50% of the American public does NOT know that shaking an infant can cause brain damage or death?
4. The brain keeps vibrating within the skull cavity after shaking occurs.
5. The brain swells, creating pressure, leading to retinal (behind the eye) bleeding, and can lead to blindness.
6. Veins feeding the brain are torn away, leading to brain damage or brain abnormality that cannot be corrected (learning disability, physical disability, visual disability, speech disability, seizures).

WARNING! If you do shake your baby, either accidentally or on purpose, it is imperative that you get the baby to the emergency room immediately.

For further information check the site for the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome (see Resources). They have a lot of information and products. Their information is copyrighted so please check out their site prior to teaching this lesson.