

SHAKING AND TOSSING--Parenting Helps for the '90s

TOSSING

Most parents enjoy the giggling and laughter of their children when they toss them into the air. Well-meaning parents frequently throw their child high in the air, and the child will scream in delight. IF THEY ONLY KNEW that their child's brain was violently striking against the inside of the skull!

The neck is very weak in small children and infants. The head, by contrast, is very heavy. The child's head snaps forward so that the chin actually hits the chest, and then snaps backward, impacting the child's neck against its back. The child's brain is being stretched back and forth while impacting front and back. This stretching motion ruptures the bridging veins of the brain, causing pressure on the brain, possible brain damage, and possible death.

DANGERS OF TOSSING CHILDREN:

- Damage to eyes
- Damage to brain
- Damage to neck

MEDICAL NOTE: If there are any questions about your child's well-being, please see your doctor as soon as possible. Tell your doctor everything. Your doctor cares about you and your child.

SHAKING

In 1952, John Caffey, M.D., published detailed medical research alerting medical professionals to the dangers of shaking children. Included in this report was a special warning that "we" needed a massive public awareness program for parents to alert them to the dangers of shaking. Dr. Caffey concluded that shaking "may be a leading cause of mental retardation" and is "a leading cause of death" in our children. Identified medically as "The Infant Whiplash Syndrome," research shows us that danger is always present but most prevalent between birth and six years of age. Babies and infants are extremely at risk. Damage may occur to the neck muscles, neck vertebrae, spinal cord, and the brain.

SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR:

1. Child not able to lift head up
2. Head turned to one side
3. Pupils dilated or pinpointed
4. Pupils not reacting to light
5. Spots or pools of blood visible in eyes
6. Nausea/vomiting
7. Semiconsciousness
8. Seizures
9. Spasms
10. Child unable to turn head from side to side

HELPFUL HINTS

1. Always support the neck of infants, babies, and small children.
2. If you are upset, calm down before dealing with your child.
3. When playing with your child, never throw or toss the child.
4. Screen all babysitters carefully. Know their temperament.

(Information provided by For Kids Sake, Inc., an organization dedicated to the early recognition and prevention of child abuse through education. FOR KIDS SAKE, INC. P.O. Box 313, Lake Elsinore, CA 92330.)