

Shaken Baby SYNDROME

What is SBS?

Shaken baby syndrome (SBS), also known as abusive head trauma, is a serious form of child abuse that causes brain injury when an infant or a child up to age 5 is violently shaken or suffers another form of head trauma. SBS, which is completely preventable, may cause:

Behavioral problems
Partial or total blindness
Hearing loss
Seizure disorders
Mental retardation or developmental delays
Cerebral palsy
Death

What happens when a baby is shaken?

A baby's neck muscles are weak and cannot support the head. When a baby is violently shaken or suffers another form of head trauma, the brain slams against the skull, damaging brain tissue, nerves, and blood vessels and causing the brain to swell. Neck and spinal injuries also are possible.

What are the symptoms of SBS?

SBS often does not produce external evidence of abuse but can be diagnosed by a healthcare professional. Immediately obtain emergency medical care if you suspect a baby or young child has been shaken. Symptoms of SBS may include:

Extreme irritability
Lethargy
Lack of appetite
Vomiting
Difficulty breathing
Semi-consciousness
Seizures

Why does my baby cry?

Babies cry up to several hours a day because they cannot explain what is bothering them, including hunger, tiredness, pain, or illness. Infants often cry even with proper care, so parents or caregivers should not blame themselves or get angry and shake a baby. They should calmly work to comfort the baby.

What should I do if my baby is crying?

Make sure the baby's basic needs, such as eating and diapering, are met.
Check for signs of illness or pain, such as fever.
Try gentle motion, such as rocking, and try soft sounds, such as singing.

What should I do if my baby won't stop crying?

Take a break. Place the baby on his or her back in a crib and go to a nearby room for up to 10 minutes.
Ask for help. Call a friend or family member for support. If nothing helps or the baby shows signs of illness, contact a healthcare professional.

SBS is a serious form of child abuse that is completely preventable.