

What if someone else is looking after my baby?

It's a good idea that anyone who is looking after kids knows how dangerous shaking a baby can be. Make sure they:

- understand the dangers of shaking a baby
- know what to do if a baby is crying
- know how to keep themselves calm if they feel frustrated or annoyed
- can contact you if they need you
- are aware of services they can call for help.

How can we tell if a baby has been shaken?

Things which might tell you if a baby has been shaken include:

- being grumpy or annoyed
- tired, no energy or not responding
- having trouble breathing
- not eating well or other feeding problems
- throwing up
- having fits
- being like a rag doll.

What do we do if a baby has been shaken?

Don't wait! Get medical help straight away. Take the baby to the health nurse, hospital or doctor because waiting can make it worse.

Services for you

If you would like some more ideas or help about finding out about Shaken Baby Syndrome you can contact your local health clinic, child health nurse or health worker.

You can also telephone:

HealthDirect

All areas 1800 022 222 (freecall)

HealthDirect is a free 24 hour health advice service where you can talk with an experienced nurse. Remember, you should always try to contact your regular doctor, nurse or health worker first.

NGALA Family Resource Centre

Perth 9368 9368

Country or remote 1800 111 546 (freecall STD)

The people at Ngala are professionals and have good ideas to help you settle a crying baby. They also have videos and brochures you can look at.

Parenting Line

Perth 9272 1466

Country or remote 1800 654 432 (freecall STD)

The Parenting Line is a free 24 hour telephone service which can give you good ideas and advice about caring for babies and children.

You can also contact your local Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS), health clinic or hospital. You will find them listed in the telephone book.

BABIES BREAK IF YOU SHAKE THEM

Information about Shaken Baby Syndrome



Aboriginal artist Val Takao

This painting is about the stresses and frustrations of day to day living. The hands in the background are a cry for help and a metaphor for 'stop'. The blue rattle and the baby are saying if you shake a baby they will break. The baby falling head first represents the fragility of the baby's head. The feet walking away from the rattle are saying if you are angry and frustrated it is better to walk away. The fist holding the rattle shows the strength of an adult hand and the damage it can cause for a baby.



Department for Community Development
Department of Health
Department of Indigenous Affairs



A baby's brain is more fragile than an egg.

Shaking a baby, even for a few seconds, can cause life threatening brain damage.

What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

Shaken Baby Syndrome is the name for when a baby is damaged for life after being shaken.

Why would anyone shake a baby?

Mum, dad or a carer might shake a baby when they feel upset and frustrated when the baby won't settle down.

All babies cry, but it can get annoying and worrying if it goes on for a long time. This can sometimes make mum, dad or the carer wild.

What can happen if a baby is shaken?

Shaking a baby can cause damage for life and even death.

When a baby is shaken their head goes backwards and forwards like whiplash. This hurts the brain.

It's even more dangerous for babies under two years old because their head is heavy and the neck muscles are not very strong. Babies can't support their own heads properly.

Shaking a baby hurts more than their head and neck. It can cause these problems too:

- blindness
- brain damage
- cerebral palsy
- fits and epilepsy
- hearing loss
- learning and behaviour problems
- paralysis.

Babies can even die when they are being shaken.



So if crying is the major cause, how can we deal with a crying baby?

Babies cry most around six to eight weeks of age, and also around seven to nine months. It is normal for babies to cry for up to two hours a day.

If a baby has been crying for a long time try checking if they are:

- hungry
- needing a nappy change
- uncomfortable
- sick or hurting
- upset or frightened of something
- feeling lonely or wants to be noticed
- teething or have wind.

Try some of these things to settle a crying baby if it's becoming too much:

- walk them gently back and forth across the room close to your heart so they can hear the beat
- take them for a walk in the pram or rock them gently in the pram
- sing or talk softly to them
- make a bit of soft background noise or turn the background noise off if it is too loud
- give them a warm bath
- lay them on your lap or a blanket on the ground and rub their back gently like a massage
- telephone someone
- take a walk away for a minute—but not too far or for too long.

It's a good idea to take a baby to the health worker, nurse or doctor for a check up if they have been crying for too long. There might be something wrong you can't see.

How can we stop Shaken Baby Syndrome from happening?

Never, ever shake a baby. If you start to feel upset or frustrated, put the baby in a safe place like a cot or pram and leave the room. Take some time out so you won't get wild. It is also a good idea to call for help.

You can call for help from your partner, family, friends, relations or even a professional.

There are some services you can call for help and ideas. They are listed on the back of this brochure.

