

What Happens if you shake your baby?

- Shaking will make your baby's head jerk back and forth. Hard. The baby isn't strong enough to stop this.
- Babies' heads are big compared to the rest of their bodies. Their necks are really weak. This is why you support their heads when you are picking them up or putting them down. Your baby's brain is fragile. When a baby gets shaken, the brain hits against the inside of the baby's head. The brain can start to bleed. This may lead to seizures, trouble learning in school, difficulties with behavior, or mental retardation.
- Babies 11 months old or younger are very easy to hurt by shaking. Even older children are hurt by shaking. Tossing a baby in the air or swinging a baby without supporting the head can also cause damage.

Babies get scared when they are shaken. It hurts a baby to be shaken. It also scares them and can make them cry even harder.

Most of the time if children get hurt, they will get better but if a head or neck injury could damage a child for life.

Talk to everyone who looks after your baby — your husband, partner, older children, babysitters, friends, relatives, daycare workers — tell them to be careful and to never never shake your baby.

Where Can I get help?

Keep a list of people you can call for help, support, and follow-up:

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Family doctor
- Community health nurse
- Local hospital
- Counsellor
- Pastor/clergy
- Child, youth & family services
- Mental Health Crisis Line
- Police

Look in the front of your phone book or the white pages for the phone numbers closest to you. Or call the Crisis Line at 1-888-737-4668.

It is never okay to shake a baby. It only takes a second to do a lifetime of damage.

Material developed by the Child Protection Coordinating Committee, Janeway Child Health Program, St. John's Health Care Corporation and the Shaken Baby Prevention Committee, Health and Community Services — St. John's Region
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Shaking a baby
even once can cause...

- Brain damage
- Blindness
- Paralysis
- Coma
- Death

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What happens if you shake your baby?

Crying is normal.

Babies cry because they are hungry, lonely, hurting, tired, bored, need a diaper change, feel uncomfortable, feel sick or need to be cuddled.

Most babies have a fussy time each day. Some babies cry because they have colic. Some times the crying can go on all day and all night.

Crying is tough ... parents and caregivers can become frustrated and angry.

You can feel tired, alone, not good enough, disappointed, or helpless.



What Can you do?

There are no easy answers, but there are things you can try.

Make your baby comfortable:

- Rub your baby's tummy or back
- Check your baby's diaper
- Make sure your baby is wearing comfortable clothes
- Feed your baby slowly and burp often
- Snuggle your baby close to you
- Offer a pacifier or teething ring

Provide gentle motion:

- Rock your baby
- Try a swing
- Take your baby for a walk in a stroller
- Strap your baby in a carseat and go for a drive

Provide relaxing sounds:

- Hum or sing
- Tell stories
- Talk about anything
- play soothing music

What if nothing works?

Taking a break is ok! If you feel yourself getting stressed, here's what you can do.

Place your baby safely in his crib on his back, turn out the lights, close the door and leave the room. Give yourself some time to calm down.

Allow someone you trust to care for your baby. Accept offers of help from family and friends. If you need a break, ask for help.

What if the crying sounds different?

Crying that sounds different from usual could mean something is wrong with your baby's health.

Crying that is louder than usual, constant, sounds different to you, causes vomiting, or seems out of the ordinary should be checked.

Shaking a baby is not first aid. If a baby isn't breathing, shaking won't help.

If this is happening with your baby, get medical help from your doctor, community health nurse, or hospital.