

## Abusive Head Trauma

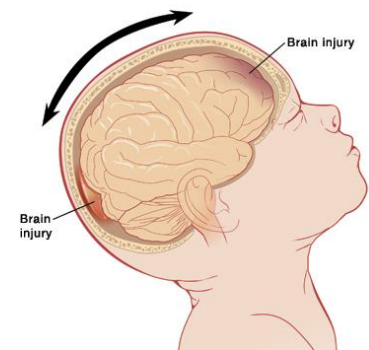
### What is abusive head trauma?

Abusive head trauma is a type of child physical abuse. It is also called shaken baby syndrome. It can also be caused by being hit, thrown or slammed. It results in bleeding on the surface of the brain and brain damage.

### What causes it?

Violent movement can cause the baby's:

- Brain to move inside the skull. This can damage the blood vessels and lead to bleeding on the surface of the brain.
- Brain tissue to tear. This can lead to brain injury. This type of abuse can cause:
  - Blindness
  - Hearing loss
  - Learning and behavior problems
  - Cerebral palsy
  - Hydrocephalus
  - Seizures
  - Death



When a baby is shaken or slammed against something, the brain can be injured through violent forces.

### Why does it happen?

Caring for a baby or young child can be very stressful. This is especially true if the baby won't stop crying. All babies cry. It is how they tell you they need something. Sometimes babies cry for no reason and will not stop crying no matter what you try. This can cause a parent or caregiver to become frustrated or angry. These feelings do not mean you are a bad parent or caregiver.

### How can it be prevented?

- **Never shake your baby. Even one violent movement can cause serious damage.**
- All babies cry. Have a plan in mind in case you feel frustrated, angry or unable to take any more. It is more important to stay calm than to stop the crying.
- Make sure anyone caring for your child knows the dangers of these actions. Please share this information with anyone who cares for your child. This includes family, friends, relatives, babysitters and day care providers.
- Choose caregivers carefully. Do not leave your baby with anyone who has a bad temper or is reckless. Never leave your baby with anyone who is violent, drinks or uses drugs.



### **If your baby won't stop crying:**

- First, try to soothe your baby:
  - Feed or burp your baby.
  - Check your baby's diaper.
  - Hold, swaddle or hold your baby against bare skin.
  - Rock your baby.
  - Go for a walk or car ride.
- Is the baby too warm or too cold?
- Could your baby have a fever?
- Is your baby tired or overwhelmed?
- If you feel frustrated, put your baby down on their back in a safe place. Shut the door and go to a different room for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Call a friend or relative to talk about how you feel.
- Sit down in another room and play music.
- Ask someone you trust to come over for a while to take care of your child.

### **Other tips**

- Do not hold your baby during an argument or if you are angry.
- If someone who is caring for your baby tells you they are angry or frustrated, respond immediately. Take over and find someone else you can trust to care for your baby.
- If you see any bruise or other injury on your baby before 7 months of age, get medical care for the baby immediately. This is not normal!
- Call your child's doctor or clinic if you need help. Ask them for help with your child's behaviors that frustrate you. This might include crying, toilet training, feeding, sleep problems and more.
- If you feel angry or out of control, call 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453). This is a free, 24-hour hotline. Or you can call the Parent Helpline at 1-414-671-0566. Trained and caring staff can give you support and advice.

A "*Caring for Your Baby during Crying*" video is available at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. If your child is in the hospital, please let your nurse know if you would like to watch it.

## What are the signs of abusive head trauma?

- Turning pale or blue
- Dilated pupils or poor eye movement
- Acting sick or not normally alert
- Poor muscle strength or tone
- Fussiness
- High-pitched cry
- Feeding problems or vomiting
- Sleepiness or not able to be woken up
- Seizures or convulsions
- Choking
- Breathing problems or gasping for air

**Note:** Abusive head trauma is not the **only** cause of these signs.

For more information go to AAP. <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Abusive-Head-Trauma-Shaken-Baby-Syndrome.aspx>

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**