

# Sometimes it's okay to walk away. NEVER SHAKE A BABY.

## **Inconsolable crying is the leading reason that a baby is shaken.**

When you are upset or angry because the baby won't stop crying, put the baby in a safe place, like their crib, and WALK AWAY. Take time to calm your nerves before returning to the baby.

### **Helpful Facts for Parents**

- When parents are tired:
  - They are at high risk for losing control.
  - It is natural to feel frustrated when crying occurs.
  - Choosing options for dealing with the crying is not as easy to think of at that point.
- Remember, when an infant cries:
  - He is too young to understand requests
  - She may be crying to relieve tension
  - Make up your mind that you are there to help your baby, not necessarily to stop your baby from crying
  - Just because it is nighttime, does not mean a baby turns off or is on your schedule.
- When your baby cries:
  - Check his basic needs.
  - Check for signs of illness.
  - Check for signs of gas or colic.
  - Burp the baby to relieve and trapped air bubbles.
- Choose a coping strategy:
  - Ask for help.
  - Give yourself a timeout.
  - Try different ideas. Be creative.
  - Make sure your needs are being met. You need time for YOU.

If nothing works and you are feeling overwhelmed, put your baby down safely in her crib before things get out of control, and then leave the room. Take a deep breath and try to unwind. See if you can find someone to give you a break, your partner or a friend or relative.

### **Stop. Calm down. Try again.**

- Choose some consoling techniques:
  - Rock the baby in a rocking chair or in your arms as you sway from side to side.
  - Gently stroke his head or pat her chest or back.

- Swaddle your baby (wrapping the baby tightly in a blanket).
- Sing or talk quietly.
- Play soft music.
- Walk with your baby in your arms, in a stroller, or a carriage.
- Ride in the car with your baby.
- Find a rhythmic noise or vibration (white noise).
- If your baby likes them, try a warm bath.
- Remember your baby cries to communicate a need, not to upset you!

### **What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?**

Shaken Baby Syndrome is child abuse. Often deadly, it is an inflicted intracranial injury (abusive head trauma). Shaken Baby Syndrome causes brain, head, spinal and eye injuries. It can be prevented.

### **Why are babies vulnerable to Shaken Baby Syndrome?**

- They have weak, underdeveloped neck muscles.
- Their heads are heavy and wobbly.
- They have large heads (Babies heads are 25 percent of their total body weight, while an adult's head is 13 percent).
- There is a space present between the brain and the skull, so there is room for the brain to grow.
- Their brain and skull are immature.
- They have immature, fragile blood vessels (bridging veins between the brain and the skull).

### **What are the consequences of Shaken Baby Syndrome?**

- Visual or auditory impairments/blindness and deafness
- Rigidity or posturing convulsions/seizures
- Cerebral palsy or severe motor dysfunction
- Paralysis
- Mental retardation or developmental delays
- Behavioral disorders or emotional impairments
- Worst case: Death

### **Possible Signs of a Shaken Baby**

- Lethargy (inexplicably sleepy)
- Decreased muscle tone
- Decreased appetite or vomiting for no apparent reason
- Difficulty breathing
- Extreme irritability
- Seizures/posturing
- Bruises on shoulders, neck, or around top part of arms, rib area or back

## **The Birthing Center**

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