

Shaken Baby Syndrome - TALKING POINTS

What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma (SBS/AHT) is a term used to describe the collection of signs and symptoms resulting from violent shaking or shaking and impacting of the head of an infant or small child.

How Common is it?

In the United States, SBS/AHT is the leading cause of physical child abuse deaths in children under five years old. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Preventing Abusive Head Trauma in Children*)

About 30 per 100,000 children under age 1 suffer from shaken baby syndrome each year in the U.S, according to a study in North Carolina.

When Does it Happen?

Most often a caregiver shakes an infant or child out of frustration or anger. This most often occurs when the baby won't stop crying. Other triggering events include toilet training difficulties and feeding problems.

What are the Signs and Symptoms?

- Lethargy / decreased muscle tone
- No smiling or vocalization
- Rigidity or posturing
- Seizures
- Grab-type bruises on arms or chest in some cases but are rare
- Decreased appetite, poor feeding or vomiting for no apparent reason
- Head or forehead appears larger than usual or soft-spot on head appears to be bulging
- Inability of eyes to focus or track movement or unequal size of pupils
- Extreme irritability
- Poor sucking or swallowing
- Difficulty breathing
- Inability to lift head



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Motion of the head during shaking event



Shaken Baby Syndrome - TALKING POINTS - cont'd

Physical Consequences of Shaking

What Happens:

- The brain rotates within the skull cavity, injuring or destroying brain tissue
- When shaking occurs, blood vessels feeding the brain can be torn, leading to bleeding around the brain
- Blood pools within the skull, sometimes creating more pressure within the skull and possibly causing additional brain damage
- Retinal (back of the eye) bleeding is very common

Immediate Consequences:

- Breathing may stop or be compromised
- Seizures
- Decreased level of consciousness
- Inability to suck or swallow
- Death
- Extreme irritability
- Limp arms and legs or rigidity / posturing
- Vomiting; poor feeding
- Heart may stop

Long-Term Consequences:

- Learning disabilities
- Visual disabilities or blindness
- Speech disabilities
- Seizures
- Cognitive impairment
- Physical disabilities
- Hearing impairment
- Cerebral Palsy
- Behavior disorders
- Death

To learn more, visit <http://dontshake.org/learn-more>

Information on this page is not intended to replace advice by a healthcare professional. If you or someone you know is concerned about a child's health please consult a physician