

Crying

Crying is a baby's way of communicating. It conveys a variety of messages, which, with experience, you will come to recognize. At times an episode may reflect the need for a diaper change; at others, it may signify hunger; some others may tell of discomfort. There will also be periods when you will be unable to comprehend the cause for the tears. This is not uncommon. It does not necessarily mean there is anything wrong with you, the milk, or even the baby. It may just be normal.

There are a number of things you can do to comfort your baby:

- Give the baby something to suck, such as a pacifier.
- Lengthen feeding times.
- Give the baby more physical contact and movement. Walk, rock or pat him.
- Take the baby for a stroller ride or car ride.
- 'Bundle' the baby (wrap him snugly in a blanket) or raise the temperature in his room a little if you think it's too cool.
- Change his position. For example, move him from his back to his side or vice versa.

If all else fails just let him cry. He may need to let off steam. Often babies fall asleep after a good cry — so allow him up to 20 minutes on his own.

Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken baby syndrome describes the serious injuries that can occur when an infant or toddler is severely or violently shaken. These children, especially babies, have very weak neck muscles and do not yet have full support for their heavy heads. When they are shaken, their fragile brains move back and forth within their skulls. This can cause serious injuries such as:

- blindness or eye damage
- delay in normal development
- seizures
- damage to the spinal cord (paralysis)
- brain damage
- death

Shaken baby syndrome usually occurs when a parent or other caregiver shakes a baby because of anger or frustration, often because the baby would not stop crying. Shaken baby syndrome is a serious form of child abuse. Parents should be aware of the severe injuries that shaking can cause. Remember that it is never okay to shake a baby.

If you or your caregiver severely or violently shakes your baby because of anger or frustration, the most important step is to get medical care right away. Immediately take your child to the pediatrician or emergency room. Don't let embarrassment, guilt, or fear get in the way of your child's health or life.

If your baby's brain is damaged or bleeding inside from severe shaking, it will only get worse without treatment. Getting medical care right away may save your child's life and prevent serious health problems from developing.

Be sure to tell your pediatrician or other doctor if you know or suspect that your child was shaken. A doctor who is not aware that a child has been shaken may assume the baby is vomiting or having trouble breathing because of an illness. Mild symptoms of shaken baby syndrome are very much like those of infant colic, feeding problems, and fussiness. Your pediatrician should have complete information so that he or she can treat your child properly.

When Your Child Cries, Take a Break— Don't Shake!

Taking care of an infant can be challenging, especially when an end to the crying seems nowhere in sight. If you have tried to calm your crying child but nothing seems to work, it's important to stay in control of your temper. Remember that it's never okay to shake, throw, or hit your child. If you feel as though you could lose control:

- Take a deep breath and count to 10.
- Take time out and let your baby cry alone.
- Call someone close to you for emotional support.

Call your pediatrician. There may be a medical reason why your child is crying.