

Children First: Safe and Secure



Section III—Parent's Corner

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaking an infant can cause brain damage, blindness, mental retardation, and even death. Head trauma is the leading cause of disability and death among abused infants and children. Violent shaking is involved in many of these cases.

Although professionals have been calling for a campaign to alert parents for decades, less than half of all Americans know that shaking a baby can lead to brain damage and death.

NEVER, EVER SHAKE A BABY!

Shaken Baby Syndrome most often occurs when parents or caregivers become angry or frustrated with a child, especially one that is crying. Instead of shaking your child, try one of these safer ways:

- ◆ Check first to see if the baby is hungry, wet, or uncomfortable
- ◆ Try giving the baby a pacifier or teething ring
- ◆ Take the baby for a walk or ride in the car
- ◆ Try hugging, rocking, or carrying the child gently
- ◆ If you find yourself getting upset or angry, ask someone trustworthy to watch the baby while you take a break.
- ◆ If all else fails, leave the baby in a safe place, such as a crib, and step out of the room or outside until you feel more in control.



Play Safely!

Occasionally a parent or caregiver causes unintentional harm by playing too roughly, throwing a small child into the air too vigorously, or hitting an infant too hard on the back. Although parents should not be afraid to handle their children or let others play with them, they should remember to be gentle.

Always take care when handling a child younger than two. A young child's head and neck are especially vulnerable.

Make sure that anyone who cares for your child--grandparents, your boyfriend or girlfriend, babysitters, or other relatives--knows that children should never be shaken for any reason.