Shaken baby syndrome describes the serious injuries that can occur when an infant or toddler is violently shaken. Young children have very weak neck muscles and do not yet have full support for their heads, which are disproportionately large in relation to their bodies. When a baby or young child is violently shaken, the head whips back and forth slamming the brain against the skull, causing bruising, bleeding and swelling inside the brain.

Shaking a baby, even for a short time, can cause serious injuries such as:
- Blindness
- Seizures
- Cerebral palsy
- Hearing loss
- Paralysis
- Speech or learning disabilities
- Death

Shaking a baby is a very serious form of child abuse!

Stop. Calm down. Get help.

Signs and symptoms of shaken baby syndrome include:
- Seizures
- Excessive sleepiness
- Not as alert
- Problems breathing
- Problems sucking or swallowing
- Decreased appetite
- Vomiting

If you think your baby has been shaken, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 immediately!

Be sure to tell the medical staff that you suspect your baby was shaken. A doctor who is not aware that a child has been shaken may treat the child’s symptoms as an illness, not an injury.

Injuries from shaken baby syndrome will only get worse without proper treatment and could lead to death. Getting the proper medical treatment right away may save your child’s life and prevent serious health problems from developing. Don’t let embarrassment, guilt or fear get in the way of saving your child’s life!

This brochure prepared and endorsed by:

Maine State Police - 42 State House Station • 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME • 04333-0042 • Tel. (207) 624-7200
www.maine.gov/dps/msp

Never Shake a Baby!
All babies cry. Crying is one of your baby’s ways of communicating, but it’s not always easy to figure out why they are crying.

When your baby cries, be patient and try to find out what your baby needs.

• Is your baby hungry?
• Does your baby need to be burped?
• Is your baby’s diaper wet or soiled?
• Is your baby too hot or cold?
• Is your baby showing signs of illness or fever?
  If yes, contact your health care provider immediately.

If your baby’s basic needs have been met but your baby continues to cry, try these additional ideas to help calm them:

• Hold your baby against your chest and walk or rock gently
• Swaddle your baby with a soft blanket
• Take your baby for a ride in a car or stroller
• Put your baby in an infant swing
• Offer your baby a pacifier or toy
• Sing or talk softly to your baby

Try each of the above ideas for a few minutes before trying something else, or try multiple ideas at the same time. Remember, sometimes none of these things will work and that is still normal.

Sometimes babies just cry. It’s okay. Crying will not hurt your baby. Caring for a baby is a tough job. All caregivers may eventually need a break from a crying baby. If you become upset by your baby’s crying, give yourself a short break.

• Gently place the baby in a crib or other safe place and leave the room
• Breath deeply and count to 10
• Call a friend or relative for support
• Relax, watch TV or listen to music
• Go back and check on your baby in 5 to 10 minutes

If you feel you might injure yourself or your baby, or if you need additional support services:

• For crisis counseling services anywhere in Maine, call 1-888-568-1112
• For information on additional services in your particular area, call 211
• For immediate emergency assistance call 911

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Here are three important action steps to take when confronted with a baby who will not stop crying.

1) Carry, Comfort, Walk, and Talk with your baby
2) If the crying becomes too frustrating it is OK to WALK AWAY!
3) NEVER shake or hurt a baby!

For more information, contact the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome at www.dontshake.org