

What You May Not Know About Abusive Head Trauma (Shaken Baby Syndrome)

The Problem

- In the United States, Abusive Head Trauma (also known as Shaken Baby Syndrome) is the second most common cause of death due to trauma, in children.
- Abusive Head Trauma (AHT), is the cause of more than 95% of serious head injuries in infants less than one year of age.
- Of the 30 Missouri children who died from inflicted injury at the hands of a parent or caretaker in 2007, 16 (53%) were victims of abusive head trauma (or inflicted traumatic brain injury).
- In 2007, perpetrators of AHT included six biological fathers, five mother's boyfriends, three child care providers, one friend of the mother and, in one case, both the birth mother and her boyfriend abused the infant (*Missouri 2007 Child Fatality Review Program Annual Report*).
- The triggering event for shaking is most always the baby's uncontrollable crying and loss of control by the caregiver.
- According to Prevent Child Abuse America, 25-50% of parents and caretakers are not aware of the effects of shaking a baby.
- Injuries from Abusive Head Trauma can result in blindness or eye damage, delay in normal development, damage to the spinal cord (paralysis), brain damage, coma, hearing loss, severe mental retardation and death.

Common Symptoms In A Child That Has Been Shaken:

- Lethargy/decreased muscle tone
- Extreme irritability
- Difficulty breathing
- Decreased appetite
- Vomiting
- No smiling or vocalization
- Poor sucking or swallowing
- Rigidity or posturing
- Seizures
- Inability to lift head
- Inability to focus or track movement with eyes or unequal size of pupils
- Head or forehead appears larger than normal or soft-spot on head appears to be bulging
(*National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome*)

When A Baby Is Crying

- 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.
(*American Academy of Pediatrics*)

Additional Suggestions

- Rock or walk with the baby
- Sing or talk to the baby
- Offer the baby a pacifier or noisy toy
- Take the baby for a ride in a stroller
- Put the baby into a child safety seat in the car and go for a ride

Resources

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, www.dontshake.org

American Academy of Pediatrics, http://www.aap.org/publiced/BR_ShakenBaby.htm

Kids Health, www.kidshealth.org/parent/medical/brain/shaken.html

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke,

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/shakenbaby/shakenbaby.htm>

Epilepsy Association of Central Florida, <http://aboutshakenbaby.com/>

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services,

<http://www.dhss.mo.gov/ShakenBabySyndrome/>

Missouri Children's Trust Fund (has both brochures and videos available), www.ctf4kids.org