If Nothing Works

- » Put your baby in a safe crib and walk away for a few minutes.
- » Take deep breaths, listen to music or call a friend.
- » Have someone come over to give you a break.
- » Remember: It's OK to step away and calm your body — crying won't harm a baby, but shaking can.

Need Help?

Prevent Child Abuse Virginia
1-800-CHILDREN

National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
www.dontshake.org



My Baby's Crying Plan

People I trust and can call for help when my baby won't stop crying.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

www.dss.virginia.gov

B032- 01-0007-06-ENG (01/2026)

Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics "Abusive Head Trauma in Infants: Technical Report (February 24, 2025)

CDC- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention- May 15, 2024.

American Academy of Pediatrics – Patient Care – Abusive Head Trauma. (last update 2/4/24)

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

If you think your child has been shaken, call 911 or go to the emergency room right away.



What Is Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)?

Abusive head trauma — sometimes called shaken baby syndrome — happens when someone shakes a baby or young child hard. Babies have weak neck muscles and heavy heads, and their brains are still soft and growing. Even a few seconds of forceful shaking can cause serious brain damage to babies and small children.

What Can Happen to the Baby?

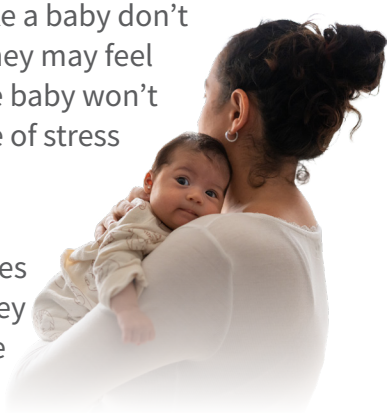
» Brain damage
» Blindness
» Seizures
» Cerebral palsy
» Paralysis
» Developmental delays
» Death (about 1 in 4 babies die)

Signs Something Is Wrong

» Very cranky or irritable
» Hard to wake up or very sleepy
» Stiff or floppy arms and legs
» Seizures or strange movements
» Won't eat or keeps vomiting
» Trouble breathing
» Bleeding in the eyes



Why Does It Happen?



Most people who shake a baby don't mean to hurt them. They may feel frustrated because the baby won't stop crying or because of stress from money, work or relationships.

Crying is normal! Babies often cry to tell you they need something — like food, a diaper change or comfort.

PURPLE crying describes a normal phase in early infancy when babies may cry more than usual. During this period, crying often peaks around two months, can happen unexpectedly, may not stop easily, and babies may look like they are in pain even when they are not. The crying can last for several hours and often occurs more in the late afternoon or evening.

This phase is temporary — the "period" means there is a beginning and an end, and most babies outgrow it by about 3 to 5 months of age.



How to Prevent AHT

» **Never shake a baby.**
» Make sure **everyone** who cares for your baby knows about AHT and why they should never shake a baby.
» If you feel frustrated, take a break. Make sure the baby is safe and step away for a few minutes. Chill out, breathe or call a friend.
» Create a baby crying plan for resources and support to call when your baby will not stop crying.

What to Do When Your Baby Cries

» Babies cry a lot in the first few months. It doesn't mean they are bad or angry. Sometimes they just need to cry.

Try These:

» Feed and burp your baby slowly.
» Check if they need a diaper change or are too hot/cold.
» Check to see if your baby is sick or has a fever.
» Rock your baby or use a pacifier.
» Play soft music or sing.
» Take a walk or a car ride.

