

Infant Crying and Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome Launch of Provincial Campaign and Resources in Calgary and Area



The Link between Crying and Shaking

All babies cry. Babies cry for many reasons. All babies have times when they can't stop crying. Crying normally starts to increase at about two weeks of age, peaks in intensity during the second month, and has decreased and stabilized by the fourth or fifth month of life. Just because infant crying is normal doesn't make it easy to deal with. According to the research, the most common reason perpetrators have given for shaking a baby is frustration dealing with infant crying¹. In fact, infant crying has been cited as the most common trigger for infant abuse in general. **Shaking a baby can be deadly.**

Why is shaking a baby so serious?

Violently shaking an infant or young child by the arms, chest, or shoulders causes the head to whiplash back and forth. Brain swelling, bleeding around the brain, bleeding in the back of the eyes, and broken ribs or other bones can result from shaking and are characteristic injuries of what is known as Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS). SBS accounts for some of the most devastating cases of child abuse and is the most common cause of death among abused children, birth to 3 years old. Depending on the study, research shows that one-fifth to one-third of the known victims of SBS die. Many SBS survivors have life-long disabilities such as blindness and/or paralysis.

Who would shake a baby?

Parents and other caregivers don't plan to shake a baby. Usually, shaking a baby is an impulsive act, by an exhausted or frustrated parent or other caregiver. **It could happen to ANYONE.**

What is being done?

The **Alberta Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Campaign** is being launched throughout the province, Fall 2006. The campaign aims to prevent the extreme frustration and loss of self-control that can result in shaking an infant or young child by doing the following:

- The campaign focuses on building personal coping skills for dealing with crying babies that can also be used in other stressful situations. Infant crying may be one of the first major challenges that many parents face but it will not be the last.
- It acknowledges that caring for infants and young children can be challenging and encourages parents and caregivers to seek help with infant care.
- It provides resources to promote and strengthen the social support networks available to help with baby and child care.

What is your role?

We can all be part of the network that supports parents and other caregivers with the challenges of child care. Start thinking about what role might be applicable to you.

- Could you promote the campaign messages and distribute the resources among your clients, colleagues and community?
- Could you teach others about coping with crying and SBS prevention?
- Could you offer to help a family member, friend or neighbour with infant care when the crying is too much?
- Could you tell parents and other caregivers about the provincial website www.cryingbaby.ca?

¹ Sleeping problems, toileting mistakes and perceived disobedience have also been given as reasons for shaking.

Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Campaign and Resources

The Alberta SBS prevention campaign and resources were developed based on a review of both the literature and the existing programming for Shaken Baby Syndrome prevention in North America. All campaign resources were pre-tested in different regions throughout Alberta. The result is a campaign that aims to help parents and other caregivers care for infants and young children by:

- increasing knowledge about crying and the dangers of shaking a baby
- increasing skills for soothing infant crying
- increasing skills for managing caregiver frustration
- increasing emergency planning and help-seeking behaviours

Service providers and other professionals in Calgary and Area can go to www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/sbs for details on how to get the following campaign resources:

Resources for Parents with Babies:

- **When your BABY can't stop CRYING** brochures: standard tri-fold, plain language version, and translated versions
- **It's OK to ask for help** magnetic notepad and mini-posters
- **Crying Plan – When your baby can't stop crying . . . what can you do?**
- **Crying Display**

Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Education Resource Kit

- The kit includes everything service providers need to educate themselves about crying and SBS prevention, and to prepare themselves to provide targeted educational sessions to professionals, parents, youth, and other caregivers. The kit, consisting of a DVD and a CD ROM, includes PowerPoint presentations; audiovisual resources; and an instructional guide that provides suggested narrative and activities for each presentation, tips for preparing for sessions, handouts to copy for session participants, and reference materials.

Posters for Young Men

- Many known SBS perpetrators have been young adult males. Four posters that speak to this target group about crying and infant shaking are under development.

Key Messages

Individual resources have different combinations of the following six key messages:

- Never shake a baby
- All babies cry
- It is more important to stay calm than to stop the crying
- Take a break, don't shake
- It's OK to ask for help
- Know you can trust your baby's caregiver

It is **More Important**
to Stay Calm Than to
Stop The Crying

Take a break, don't shake



About the Alberta SBS Prevention Network and the Calgary Injury Prevention Coalition SBS Prevention Committee

The Alberta Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Network was formed to guide and implement a SBS prevention campaign for Alberta. The provincial network consists of stakeholders from a variety of disciplines, including health, social work, enforcement, child care, and high-risk community outreach (for more information go to www.shakenbaby.ca). The Calgary Injury Prevention Coalition (CIPC) Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) Committee is also a multidisciplinary group and has been significantly involved in the development of the provincial campaign. The CIPC SBS Prevention Committee is also responsible for the implementation of the campaign in Calgary and Area (for more information go to www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/sbs).