



What is Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS)?

SBS is a serious or fatal brain injury which occurs when a frustrated caregiver violently shakes a baby or young child. It is a serious form of child abuse.

How does SBS happen?

SBS happens when a child is held by the arms or by the trunk of the body and shaken in a back and forth **whiplash** motion. After the shaking, the child is often thrown down. This results in an additional **impact** injury.

The violent shaking causes delicate veins between the brain and skull to tear and bleed. The blood pools between the skull and lining of the brain. This results in pressure on the brain. The pressure bruises the brain and destroys brain cells. If the pressure caused by the swelling is not controlled or relieved the child's breathing and heartbeat will stop.

Why do people shake babies?

People who shake babies are unable to control their frustration and anger. Shaking most often occurs when a caregiver is trying to stop a baby from crying. Caregivers can also lose control over toilet-training issues, feeding problems or interrupted television viewing.

Who shakes babies?

Studies show that two-thirds to three-quarters of the abusers are biological fathers or boyfriends. Female childcare providers are the next most likely to lose control and shake a child. This is followed by mothers.

What are the signs that a baby has been shaken?

Signs that a baby has been shaken may appear immediately or over a longer period of time. This depends on how violently and how long the baby was shaken.

The signs of SBS can include one or more of the following:

- irritability
- poor feeding
- vomiting
- sleepiness
- seizures
- breathing problems
- coma
- death, **25-30% of SBS victims die.**

What happens to victims who survive SBS?

As many as 60% of SBS survivors experience one or all of the following:

- brain damage
- cerebral palsy
- paralysis
- seizures
- blindness
- deafness
- learning and behavioural problems
- speech difficulties
- vegetative state

All of these conditions need to be supported by the health care system for the lifetime of the victim. This can be costly in financial and human terms.

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What can parents and caregivers do to prevent SBS?

To reduce the possibility of shaking a baby, parents and caregivers can do the following:

- hold the baby often during the day. Car seats, swings and cribs cannot replace human touch.
- make sure baby's basic needs for food, diapering and clothing are met.
- offer the baby something to suck on.
- take baby for a walk or a car ride.
- talk to a friend, relative, or neighbour; ask for help when you need it so you get a break.
- teach young children how to hold and care for a baby.
- attend parenting or anger management classes.
- tell your caregiver/babysitter to call you to come home if they cannot cope with your baby's crying.
- if you are very frustrated by your baby's crying do the following:
 - **STOP** and put the baby in the crib
 - go to a different room and **SIT DOWN**
 - **CALM DOWN** (e.g.: take deep breaths, play soothing music)
 - check the baby every 5 minutes.
 - call someone you trust to come over and help.

Where can I get more information or help?

For help you can contact any of the following agencies:

- Population and Public Health
 - North East – 655-4700
 - South East – 655-4730
 - West Winds Primary Health Centre – 655-4275
- Department of Community Resources
 - Family Support Centre – 933-7751
- Crisis Nursery – 242-2433
- Mobile Crisis – 933-6200
- Saskatoon Family Services – 244-0127
- Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps - 655-2512
- Saskatoon Police – 975-8300
- Corman Park Police – 242-8808
- Vanscoy Police – 668-2166
- RCMP – 975-5173

Never, Never Shake a Baby!

Remember, one moment of losing your self-control can lead to a lifetime of suffering and tragedy for an entire family.

For more information, call Population and Public Health at 306-655-4462.