



Children's Trust Fund

Missouri's Foundation For Child Abuse Prevention

Strong Families, Safe Kids

The Crying Playbook: Countdown to Calm

Prevent Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)

Abusive Head Trauma describes injury inflicted to the brains of infants and young children.

AHT is not caused by gentle age-appropriate play, such as bouncing a baby on a knee, snuggling or rocking a baby.

It is caused by injury through violent shaking and/or blunt impact to a child's head, such as forcefully hitting, slamming or throwing a child.

All it takes is a moment of lost control and violent shaking by a caregiver for an infant to become injured, become permanently disabled or *even* die.

AHT can cause:

brain damage • blindness • spinal injuries and paralysis
seizures • severe learning and behavior problems • death

You can prevent AHT:

1 Practice the 4 Ss:

- **Suck** (offer your baby a pacifier) • **Swaddle** (until baby shows signs of rolling)
- **Sway** (gently rock your baby) • **Shush** (or another soothing sound)

2 Take a break. Never hurt a baby.

3 Ask for help.

4 Choose an appropriate caregiver

- It is dangerous to leave your baby with anyone who becomes angry, loses control easily or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Let caregivers know to call you anytime they become frustrated.



Babies cry...a lot! It's how they communicate.

- Crying causes frustration! ...especially during the first 5 months.
- A normal, healthy baby may cry up to 6 hours or more each day.
- Babies will cry the most at age 2-3 months...but have patience.
- After 3 months old, your baby will begin to cry less each week.

Crying is the #1 reason babies are shaken or hurt by their caregivers.

Ways to help soothe a crying baby:

- First...check to see if your baby is hungry or needs a diaper change.
- Try the **4 Ss**: **S**uck, **S**waddle, **S**way, **S**hush
- Sing or play a recorded lullaby or other soothing music.
- Call your doctor if you think your baby might be sick.

Remember...sometimes your baby will cry no matter what you do.

If you become TOO frustrated:

- Take a break. Lay your baby down on his or her back in a crib or bassinet.
- Sit down, leave the room, take a deep breath...calm yourself...and then check on the baby every 5 minutes.
- If you still feel overwhelmed, call someone for help.

Have a plan—never hurt a baby.
It's okay to walk away.

For more information, contact your local hospital emergency room or your pediatrician.

ParentLink Warmline
800-552-8522
888-460-0008 (En Español)

TEL-LINK 800-835-5465

National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
dontshake.org

Report Child Abuse
800-392-3738

