

# What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

Shaken Baby Syndrome was originally referred to as “whiplash” syndrome. This syndrome is a type of traumatic brain injury that happens when a baby is shaken, in a to-and-fro fashion. Most think that Shaken Baby Syndrome happens only in violent situations, where an adult is aggressive with the child, to the point of injury. Many people are shocked to learn that serious brain injuries may result from play activities.

Babies have weak neck muscles and a large, heavy head. Shaking, or rotation of the head about its center of gravity makes the fragile brain bounce back and forth inside the skull and may cause bruising, swelling, and bleeding, which can lead to permanent, severe brain damage or death.

The characteristic injuries of Shaken Baby Syndrome are retinal (eye) bleeding, subdural (brain) bleeding, damage to the spinal cord and neck, and fractures of the ribs and bones. These injuries may not be noticed immediately. Signs and symptoms of Shaken Baby Syndrome include extreme irritability, stiffness, unable to wake up, sleeping more than usual, poor feeding, dilated pupils or blood spots in eyes, breathing problems, convulsions, vomiting, and pale or bluish skin. Shaken baby injuries usually occur in children under the age of 2, but may be seen in children up to the age of 5.

So what play activities can lead to Shaken Baby Syndrome? Some of these activities are as follows: Vigorous, repeated tossing of a small child into the air, jogging while carrying an infant on the back or shoulders, bouncing a child on an adult’s knee or swinging the child on an adult’s leg, and spinning a child around. Remember, to be careful with play activities and monitor the response of your child.

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