

# Don't shake the baby

**Never  
shake a  
child for any  
reason**

Shaking can  
cause damage  
that you  
cannot see

There are  
different ways  
to cope with a  
crying baby

Shaking can  
cause damage  
that is long  
lasting

Shaking is  
often a response  
to extreme  
frustration

Do not suffer  
alone, seek  
support from  
others

“

I thought I couldn't manage. She cried all the time, I was exhausted and nothing worked. I felt such a failure. I got so angry with her I felt like shaking her to stop her noise. I had no idea how much that could hurt her.

”

## Why do people shake babies?

Often babies and young children are shaken when a parent or carer becomes very frustrated when they will not stop crying. Many parents may not realise the extent of the damage that a shake can do to a young child. However, there are many alternatives to try and people to talk to. Some very rough play with a young child can also cause some similar injuries so never shake a young child.

## What damage can shaking cause?

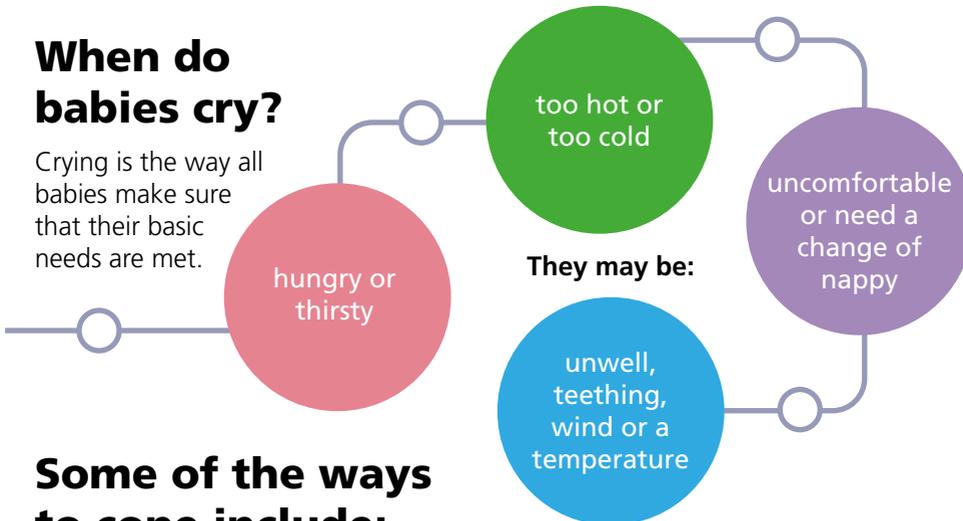
Shaking a baby can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain damage. Those that survive shaking may be severely disabled, have seizures and be unable to care for themselves. A baby's head is big and heavy compared to the rest of its body. When a baby is shaken his or her head wobbles rapidly back and forth. The force of this can tear the blood vessels that connect the brain and skull. This happens because the neck muscles are not strong enough to hold the head firmly. The action of shaking can cause serious damage, even though the parent does not perceive it as fierce.

Make sure everyone else knows about the dangers. This includes friends, relatives, babysitters and brothers and sisters.

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## When do babies cry?

Crying is the way all babies make sure that their basic needs are met.



## Some of the ways to cope include:

- Count to ten before doing anything and allow yourself to calm down.
- Consider using a dummy or gently rub and massage your baby.
- Hug and cuddle your child – perhaps with the use of a baby-carrier so that they are close to your body in order to help soothe them.

- Go for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- If necessary walk out of the room for a short time or do something to take a break from the sound like taking a quick shower or listening to music.
- Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.

Asking for help is a sign of coping. It's ok if your baby cries while you calm down. Letting your baby cry is safer than yelling, hitting or shaking.



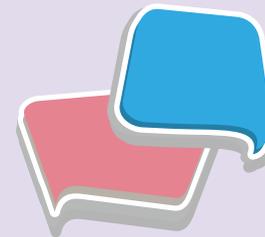
## Warning Signs

A range of signs can indicate if a child may have been shaken, including feeding difficulties, lethargy, eye injuries, vomiting, irritability, speech and learning difficulties, developmental delay, seizures and paralysis.



## Action

If you are worried about your child, take him or her to see your doctor, health visitor or to your nearest Emergency Department. Seek support, including using the helplines listed under the *Contacts* section.



## What to say

Develop communication with your child using eye contact, smiling, cuddling and talking. This will develop your understanding and responsiveness to your baby's needs when he/she is having difficulties.



## Prevention

It is never safe to shake a child, not even in play. It is important for siblings playing together or for the babysitter or any other carer to be made aware of the dangers.

## Contacts

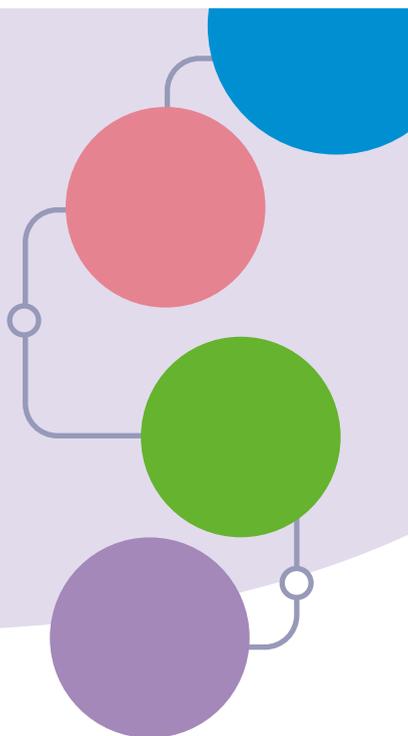
CRY-SIS Helpline – **08451 228 669**  
(7 days a week, 9am-10pm)

Parentline Plus – **0808 800 2222**

NHS Direct (24 hours)  
**0845 4647**

NSPCC Helpline (24 hours)  
**0808 800 5000**

Your family Health Visitor



### Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)  
Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

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To be completed by the Communications office  
Leaflet code: PIL202103-01-DSB  
Created: March 2021 / Review Date: March 2023

