

Shaken Baby Syndrome: Facts and Figures

What is Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS)?

- SBS is a form of child abuse that occurs when an adult or older child violently shakes a baby or young child.
- It only takes a few seconds of violent shaking to cause permanent damage.

What causes Shaken Baby Syndrome?

- SBS is usually caused by a frustrated parent or caregiver who shakes a baby when it will not stop crying, or because of some other personal stress like money or relationship problems.
- Everyday play, like bouncing a baby on your knee or gently tossing a baby in the air, cannot cause SBS.

What are the results of SBS?

- Immediate symptoms of SBS include tiredness, not eating, no smiling, talking or laughing, difficulty swallowing, sucking, or breathing, vomiting, difficulty staying awake, or the baby is very stiff or like a rag doll.
- Shaking can cause brain injury, cerebral palsy, blindness, hearing loss, learning and behavior problems, seizures, paralysis, and death.
- It is estimated that 1,000–3,000 children in the United States suffer from SBS each year.
- One fourth of victims of SBS die, and 80 percent of survivors suffer from permanent damage.
- In the United States, the costs of hospitalization and continuing care for SBS victims can total \$1.2 to \$16 billion dollars each year.

How serious is SBS in New York State?

- An average of 33 children under the age of 4 years old are hospitalized each year for SBS.
- The average charge for each hospitalization is \$65,000.

What can we do to prevent SBS?

- It is important to educate parents and caregivers about the dangers of SBS. Anyone caring for a child should know that if a baby is not uncomfortable or sick but will not stop crying, it is okay to put the baby down in a safe place (like a crib) and take a short break to relax.
- New parents should know that it is common for babies to cry for up to three hours a day – some cry even more than this.
- NYS legislation requires that hospital maternity wards offer to show new parents a video on shaken baby syndrome before they leave the hospital.
 - If you suspect a baby has been shaken, you should call 911 or take the baby to the closest hospital emergency room.

