

ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA

(SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME)

WHAT IS ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA (AHT)?

AHT describes the brain injury symptoms that come from severe, violent shaking or trauma to the head of a baby or a young child.

AHT is **NOT** caused by:



Bouncing baby



Tossing baby in the air



Jogging with baby



Short falls



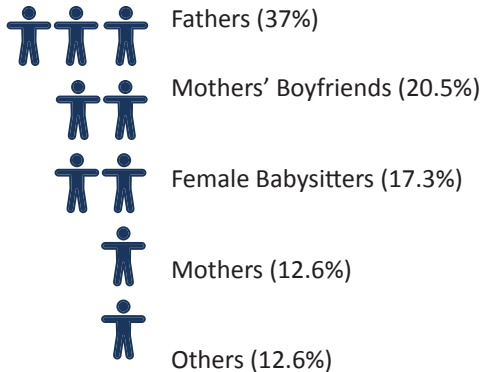
Sudden stops in the car

What Happens: Babies are light so it can be easy to shake or move them. A baby's brain is different than an adult's brain. A baby's brain is softer and easily moves around if shaken.



- The brain and eyeballs rotate
- Blood vessels tear and brain tissue is hurt
- Pools of blood push on the brain
- Bleeding at the back of the eye

Who is Most Likely To Cause AHT:



Why are babies at risk:

- 1 Babies have big, heavy heads and small bodies
- 2 Babies have weak necks
- 3 Babies have brains that are still growing and can be hurt

SYMPTOMS

- More irritable and sleepy than normal
- Hard to wake from sleep
- Fast growth of head
- Unable to lift head
- Swollen soft spot on head
- Eyes roll back
- Not focused eyes
- Different pupil size
- Not hungry
- Vomiting without fever/diarrhea
- Not smiling or making sounds
- Poor suck or swallow
- Blue lips or pale skin
- Seizures
- Unknown bruises
- Strange body positions
- Coma or death

6
months
old

Occurs most often before 6 months old

1st
year

Babies are at the greatest risk within the 1st year of life

~1,300 cases yearly



a few seconds of shaking or trauma can cause severe injury or death

#1

cause of severe traumatic brain injury in children under 1

~80%

of children experience lifelong disabilities

#1

cause of death from trauma in children under 2

~25%

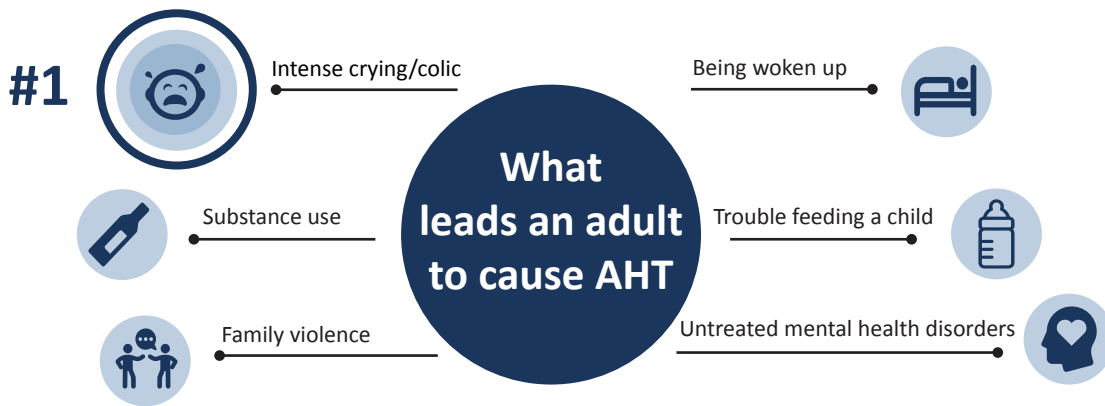
of children die

~3%

of parents anonymously report shaking their babies

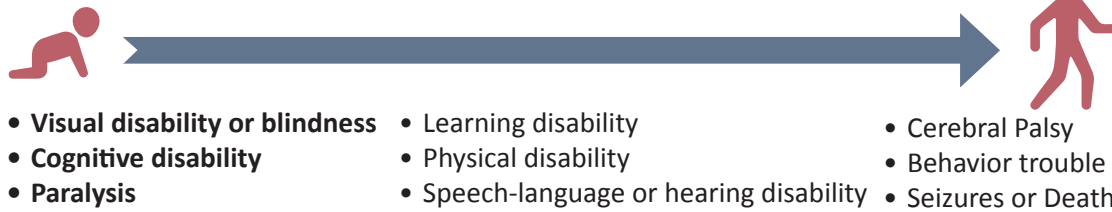
Abusive Head Trauma is **under-diagnosed**

POSSIBLE CAUSES



OUTCOMES

Outcomes depend on the severity of damage



PREVENTION

To calm a crying baby...



If your baby continues to cry...

- Take deep breaths
- Put the baby in a safe place and walk away. Check on the baby every 5 minutes
- Call a friend, relative, or neighbor for a break
- Call your child's doctor

RESOURCES

No one plans to hurt a baby. **Be prepared.**

Open your smartphone's camera app and point it at the QR code. The link will appear for you to tap.



<https://www.cryingbabyplan.org>

Crying Baby Plan



<https://dontshake.org>

National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome: Resources



<http://purplecrying.info>

The Period of Purple Crying



<https://rb.gy/2loi7>

References

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: **1-833-943-5746**

Parent Support Hotline: **1-800-422-4453**



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WHY THIS MATTERS NOW



Laws

Legal change is needed to reduce the incidence of AHT

Current laws such as Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) and Refundable Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) can reduce parent stress and AHT rates



Equity Issues

Black, Latino, and Female workers are less likely to have access to paid family medical leave



Covid-19

When parents are stressed there is a greater risk for child abuse

Increased number of death from AHT

Increased severity of AHT injury

Unclear effect on rates of AHT