

## Choose your baby's caregivers wisely.

Consider the following questions when choosing someone to watch your baby:

**The answers to these questions should be YES:**

- Does this person want to watch my baby?
- Will I have an opportunity to watch this person with my baby before I leave?
- Is this person good with babies?
- Has this person done a good job caring for other babies that I know?
- Will my baby be cared for in a place that is safe?
- Have I told this person that a baby should never be shaken?

**The answers to these questions should be NO:**

- Will this person become angry if my baby cries or bothers him or her?
- If this person is angry with me for leaving, will he or she treat my baby roughly?
- Does this person have a history of violence that makes him or her a danger to my baby?
- Has this person had children removed from his or her custody because he or she was unable to care for them?

Tell anyone who cares for your baby to call you *any time* they become frustrated or have concerns.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Abusive Head Trauma?

Signs and symptoms of Abusive Head Trauma include:

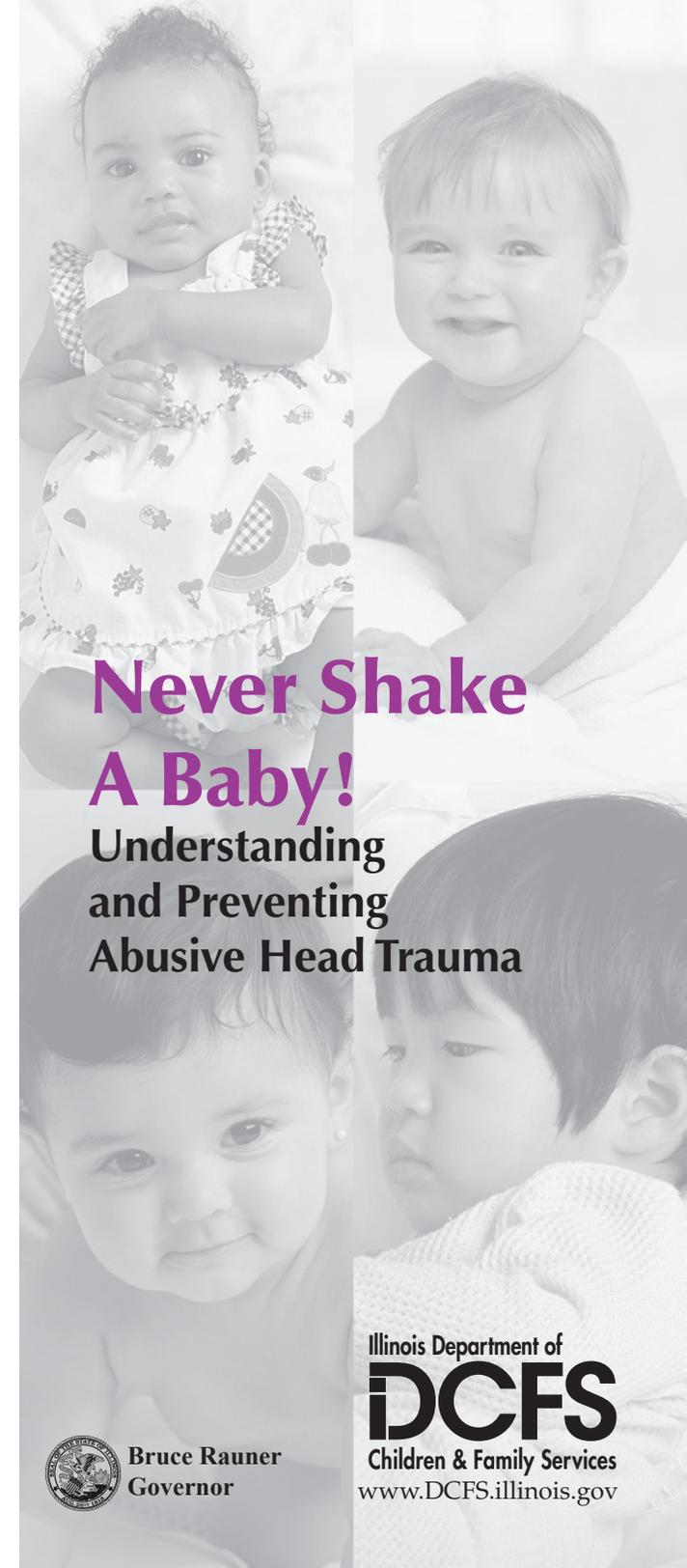
- Extreme crankiness
- Difficulty staying awake
- Irregular or difficulty breathing
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Tremors or shakiness
- Poor sucking or swallowing
- Lack of smiling or vocalizing
- Rigidity

## What should I do if I think my baby has been shaken?

Call 911 or immediately go to the closest hospital emergency room. Be sure to tell the doctor or nurse if you know or suspect that your child was shaken. A doctor who is not aware that a child has been shaken may treat the child's symptoms as an illness, not an injury. Injuries from Abusive Head Trauma will only get worse without treatment and could lead to death. Getting the proper medical treatment right away may save your child's life and prevent serious health problems from developing. Don't let embarrassment, guilt or fear get in the way of your child's health or life.

For more information, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)  
or Prevent Child Abuse Illinois at [www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org)

Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois  
DCFS #435 – Feb 2016 – 6,000 Copies  
CFS 1050-81 – Rev. 6/09



# Never Shake A Baby!

## Understanding and Preventing Abusive Head Trauma



**Bruce Rauner**  
Governor

Illinois Department of  
**DCFS**  
Children & Family Services  
[www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov)

## What is Abusive Head Trauma?

Abusive Head Trauma is a form of inflicted traumatic brain injury. Abusive Head Trauma (also called Shaken Baby Syndrome) describes the serious injuries that can occur when an infant or toddler is severely or violently shaken. These children, especially babies, have very weak neck muscles and do not yet have full support for their heads which are disproportionately large in relation to their bodies. When a baby or young child is shaken, the head whips back and forth slamming the brain against the hard skull, causing bruising, bleeding and swelling inside the brain. Normal interaction with a child, like bouncing the baby on a knee will not cause these injuries. However, it is important to never shake a baby because gentle shaking can escalate.



## What types of injuries can be caused by Abusive Head Trauma?

Shaking a baby or young child, even for a short time can cause irreversible damage. In the worst cases, children die from their injuries. Children who survive may have:

- Partial or total blindness
- Mental retardation
- Developmental delays

- Seizures
- Cerebral palsy
- Paralysis
- Speech and learning difficulties
- Problems with memory and attention

## What should I do when my baby cries?

All babies cry! Crying is your baby's way of communicating. When your baby cries, he may be trying to tell you he:

- Is hungry
- Needs to be burped
- Needs his diaper changed
- Is too hot or too cold
- Is in pain  
(Check for fever or teething; call your doctor or health clinic for advice.)

If your baby's basic needs have been met, the following things may help to calm your baby:

- Offer her a pacifier
- Hold her against your chest and walk or rock gently
- Place her in an infant swing
- Take her for a ride in her stroller
- Play soothing music
- Sing or talk to her
- Take her to a quiet room

## Prevent Injury, Don't Shake!

## What should I do if I become upset by my baby's crying?

Sometimes babies just cry. It's okay. Crying will not hurt your baby. *It's better to let your baby cry than shake him.*

Shaking a baby is a serious form of child abuse. Anyone can shake a baby. The number one reason given by perpetrators of Abusive Head Trauma is that they were angry or frustrated because the baby wouldn't stop crying.

It's normal to feel stress when a baby is crying. Recognize when you are beginning to feel anxious or angry. Caring for a baby is a tough job. Have a plan in place because you don't want to hurt your child. If you become upset by your baby's crying, take a break, even if it means leaving the baby to cry for a few minutes:

- Gently place your baby on its back in a crib or other safe place and leave the room
- Relax, breathe deeply, and count to 10, 20 or 30
- Don't feel guilty about asking for help—call a friend or relative for support or to take over for a while
- Watch TV, listen to music, or take a shower
- As you calm down, check on your baby every five to 10 minutes