

### TEST YOUR SAFETY I.Q.

**Q** What is the most common cause of mortality in child abuse cases in the United States?

**A** Shaken Baby Syndrome – In fact, almost 2000 babies die every year as a result of this abuse.<sup>1</sup>

**Q** What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

**A** Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) is a collective term for the internal head injuries a baby or young child sustains from being violently shaken.<sup>2</sup>

## Think**First** about...

### DEATH AND INJURY STATISTICS

- An estimated 50,000 cases occur each year in the United States.<sup>3</sup>
- 60% of victims are male.<sup>4</sup>
- Retinal hemorrhages are found in 50-80% of shaken babies.<sup>5</sup>
- There may be no visible injuries on the baby.<sup>6</sup>

### Cause

- Most shaking occurs as a frustrated reaction to inconsolable crying.<sup>7</sup>
- Shaken Baby Syndrome results from vigorously shaking a baby for usually around 5-20 seconds.<sup>8</sup>
- Because a baby's head is so heavy in comparison to the rest of the body and the neck muscles are not yet strong, a baby's head can shake back and forth 40-80 times in just seconds.<sup>9</sup>

### Effects

- One third of all shaken babies will suffer developmental problems<sup>10</sup> which include:
  - Partial or Total Blindness
  - Hearing Loss
  - Seizures
  - Developmental Delays
  - Impaired Intellect
  - Speech and Learning Difficulties
  - Problems With Memory and Attention
  - Paralysis
  - Severe Mental Retardation<sup>11</sup>

### WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO INCUR THIS TYPE OF INJURY?

- Victims may be up to 4 years old,<sup>12</sup> but the average age is 3-8 months.<sup>13</sup>
- The risk is higher for families living at or below the poverty level.<sup>14</sup>
- Those involved with domestic violence and/or substance abuse may also be at a higher risk of inflicting shaken baby syndrome.<sup>15</sup>
- In 65-90% of cases, males in their early 20's are the perpetrators. These men are generally the baby's father or mother's boyfriend.<sup>16</sup>
- When a woman is responsible, she is generally the babysitter or childcare provider rather than the mother.<sup>17</sup>

### HEALTH COSTS

- The primary hospitalization of a shaken baby is estimated to be \$75,000-\$95,000.<sup>18</sup>
- For survivors, a lifetime of special care is needed, which can cost \$300,000 in the first five years alone.<sup>19</sup>
- Society bears much of the expenditure through insurance, government assistance, and higher special education costs.<sup>20</sup>

# ThinkFirst about...

### PREVENTION TIPS

Educate all caregivers on the dangers of shaking an infant:

- THINK FIRST
- STOP
  - The first step is to place the baby in a crib or playpen and leave the room in order to calm down.<sup>21</sup>
- CALM DOWN
  - Call a friend or neighbor.
  - Take ten deep breaths, and then take ten more.
  - Do something for yourself: Play music, close your eyes, run the vacuum.
  - Make sure the baby is fed and dry.
  - Take the baby for a ride in a stroller or car.
  - Offer the baby a pacifier.
  - Cuddle the baby close to your chest and rock or walk the baby.
  - Put the baby in a baby swing.
  - If nothing works, put the baby back in the crib and check back in 10 minutes.
  - Call a healthcare provider, medical attention may be required.<sup>22</sup>

### STILL NOT CONVINCED?

The average baby cries for two to three hours every day, and 20-30% of all infants surpass this length, often significantly.<sup>23</sup> Since crying is the number one trigger of shaking a baby, parents and childcare providers must avoid anger and control frustration. Although the sound of crying can cause tension, it is important to realize that babies cry as a form of communication, not an indication of parenting skills. Remember, crying will not kill anyone, but shaking a baby, whether out of frustration or fun, can. An estimated 25-50% of parents and caretakers are uninformed of the dangerous results of shaking a baby.<sup>24</sup> Protect your child by alerting anyone who interacts with your baby on the dangers of shaking. Find safe ways to deal with the tensions of parenting, and no matter what, never ever shake a baby!

## ThinkFirst

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#### SOURCES:

<sup>1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 22</sup> [http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/medical/brain/shaken\\_p3.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/medical/brain/shaken_p3.html)

<sup>2, 3, 17, 21</sup> Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine [www.findarticles.com/cf\\_dls/g2601/0012/2601001246/print.jhtml](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/g2601/0012/2601001246/print.jhtml)

<sup>5</sup> National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome <http://www.dontshake.com/sbsquestions.html>

<sup>6</sup> N.F.A.N.C. <http://www.gangfreekids.org>

<sup>9, 10</sup> [www.jsonline.com/Alive/column/apr02/32320.asp](http://www.jsonline.com/Alive/column/apr02/32320.asp)

<sup>15</sup> [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

<sup>18</sup> The National Conference on Shaken Baby Syndrome: A Medical, Legal, and Prevention Challenge, Executive Summary  
Alexandria, VA: National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, 1996

<sup>19</sup> [www.state.me.us/dhs/bohdcfh/inj/fs\\_sbs.html](http://www.state.me.us/dhs/bohdcfh/inj/fs_sbs.html)

<sup>20</sup> [www.shakenbaby.com/intro\\_prevention.htm](http://www.shakenbaby.com/intro_prevention.htm)

<sup>23</sup> Children's Advocate, Action Alliance for Children [www.4children.org/news/502babye.htm](http://www.4children.org/news/502babye.htm)

<sup>24</sup> National Shaken Baby Syndrome Campaign 2000 <http://www.preventchildabuse.com/shaken.htm>