



**Kane County AOK: Early Childhood Networks**  
113 South Grove Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120  
Fax: (847) 697-6432

Nurse Coordinator: Alvina Eineke (630) 232-5926  
[einekealvina@co.kane.il.us](mailto:einekealvina@co.kane.il.us)

[www.kanehealth.com](http://www.kanehealth.com)

Administrative Assistant: Lourdes Valdes (630) 444-3047  
[valdeslourdes@co.kane.il.us](mailto:valdeslourdes@co.kane.il.us)

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This is the second article of a year long Safety Information Series for Parents presented by AOK: All Our Kids Early Childhood Network of Kane County.

## **What's all that crying about?**

Crying is normal. All babies cry. Most infants will at some time or another have inconsolable crying sessions that last for long periods of time, even several hours. What's a parent to do?

According to the Erikson Institute, a leading Chicago-based graduate school in child development, about 37,000, or one in five, infants born in Illinois this year will cry excessively. "Excessive" crying has been shown to be a factor in family distress, developmental problems, maternal depression and even child abuse. Erikson researchers found through a survey of emergency room admissions that one-third of infant admissions for crying did not have underlying medical problems.

Excessive crying affects infants regardless of birth order, gender, feeding style, or cultural group. In most cases, excessive crying resolves without intervention in a few months.

An unfortunate outcome of a crying baby is that frustrated parents and other caregivers think that shaking a baby is a harmless way to make him stop crying but instead cause severe injury referred to as Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Shaken Baby Syndrome is when a baby is shaken enough to cause the head to move back and forth. This sudden movement can cause bleeding inside the head. The bleeding causes pressure on the brain that can cause the brain to pull apart. A baby's head and neck are at risk for this head trauma because his or her muscles are not fully developed and the brain tissue is extremely breakable. Head trauma is the leading cause of disability for abused infants and children; Shaken Baby Syndrome is one of the leading forms of child abuse that result in death.

Shaken Baby Syndrome happens most frequently for infants younger than six months old but can occur in children as old as three years. Often there are no clear signs noticeable of injury to the head or behind the eyes. However, shaking a baby even for only a few seconds can injure a baby for life. These injuries include brain swelling and damage, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, developmental delay, blindness, hearing loss, and paralysis. One in four babies die from Shaken Baby Syndrome.

### **Safe Ways to Calm a Crying Baby**

Coping with a crying baby is not easy but there are several things parents and caregivers can do. A nationally renowned pediatrician, Dr. Karp, recommends using the five S's to calm a baby. The five S's are swaddling, side or stomach lying while being held, shushing sound close to baby's ear, swinging baby gently, and sucking at mom's breast or a pacifier.

**Other methods for calming a baby are:**

- Take the baby for a walk outside in a stroller or for a ride in the car (be sure baby is secured in a car safety seat).
- Hold the baby against your chest and gently massage him.
- Rock, walk or dance with baby (a variation of swinging gently).
- Lower any noises or lights in the environment.
- Offer the baby a noisy toy or rattle.
- Hold the baby and breathe slowly and calmly; baby may feel your calmness and become quiet.
- Sing or talk in soothing tones.
- Use the low hum of a vacuum cleaner or hair dryer (variation of Shhhhh sounds)

Parents and others caring for infants need to keep in mind that baby can feel when caretakers are anxious or upset. It is important when trying to calm a baby that you are calm. Be patient. Take deep calming breaths and count to ten. If you are having difficulty calming yourself, it is OK to place the baby in a safe place, like his crib, and take a break to calm yourself in another room. Most important, ask for help. Call a friend or relative that you trust to take over for a while, and then get away for some rest or take a walk.

Remember that crying, even inconsolable crying is normal. There is no one method of calming that works for every baby or that works every time for your baby. Parents should not feel guilty about not being able to calm their baby. Take a break yourself. But, **NEVER, NEVER SHAKE A BABY.** A moment of angry shaking is a life or death situation for the baby.

**Helpful resources to learn more about Shaken Baby Syndrome:**

AOK: All Our Kids Early Childhood Network of Kane County

For written information on "*The 5 S's On How To Calm a Crying Baby*" and other topics go to:

<http://www.kanehealth.com/aok.htm>

630-232-5829

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois

<http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org/>

528 So. 5th St., Suite 211, Springfield, Illinois

Phone 217-522-1129

Erikson Institute of Chicago

[http://www.erikson.edu/research.asp?file=rp\\_fussy](http://www.erikson.edu/research.asp?file=rp_fussy)

Fussy Baby Network (through the Erikson Institute)

1-888-431-BABY (2229)

Prevent Child Abuse National

<http://www.preventchildabuse.com/shaken.htm>

For crisis counseling, call ChildHelp at 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

Shaken Baby Syndrome

[http://www.aboutshakenbaby.com/coping\\_with\\_crying\\_baby.htm](http://www.aboutshakenbaby.com/coping_with_crying_baby.htm)

Site sponsored by the Epilepsy Association of Central Florida

1-866-864-1412

National Center for Shaken Baby Syndrome

<http://www.dontshake.com/>

801-627-3399 (Office)

888-273-71 (Toll Free)

American Academy of Pediatrics Health topics for parents

<http://www.aap.org/topics.html>

Dr. Karp – Happiest Baby

<http://www.thehappiestbaby.com/default.asp>