Take Care of Yourself

Sometimes babies will cry, no matter what you do. It doesn't mean that you're a bad parent, or not good at soothing your infant. It just means that sometimes, some babies just need to cry and that's normal. If the crying is getting to you and you're beginning to feel upset by it...

- **Gently place your infant in the crib on his or her back.** Go to another room, away from the crying. You know that it's okay to **STEP AWAY, RIGHT AWAY** and calm down. Remember, no infant has ever died from crying but babies do die from shaking and slamming injuries caused by angry parents and caregivers who didn't know it was okay to step away.

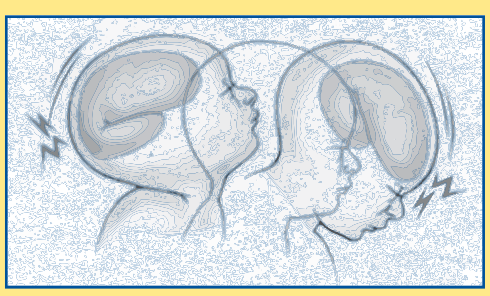
- **Never pick up your baby if feeling frustrated or angry** FOR ANY REASON, (e.g. you've had an argument, your job is stressful, you're upset over money problems). **STEP AWAY, RIGHT AWAY**, so you won't lose control.

- **Sit or lie down, close your eyes, and relax.** Slowly count to ten. Do some deep breathing. Listen to music. Take a shower or soothing bath. Imagine doing something you really like to do. Call a friend or relative and talk about what's going on. See if someone can come by for a while. Check the baby every 15 minutes or so, but only if you are calm.

- **Call 1-800-632-8188, the free, 24-hour Massachusetts Parental Stress Line.** Trained and caring staff are waiting to give you support and good advice. They know that taking care of a baby can be difficult, and that all parents and caregivers need support from time to time.

Remember – If you ever feel like shaking, slamming, hitting, throwing, or yelling at your baby, stop what you're doing! Take a few deep breaths, gently place your baby in the crib, then STEP AWAY, RIGHT AWAY and calm down! Take a break and relax. Know that even a lot of crying is normal and that you and your baby will get through this tough time.

Shaken Baby Syndrome



- **NEVER** shake your baby to make him stop crying or fussing, no matter how frustrated you feel. Babies and small children can be hurt or even killed from being shaken, or slammed against a crib mattress, couch or hard surface. This can cause bleeding and swelling inside the brain that can result in serious and permanent damage. Up to a third of shaken children die from their injuries. Many survivors suffer mental retardation, seizures, blindness, deafness, paralysis, and speech and learning problems. Families are significantly affected by SBS as they struggle with the loss of a child, long-term care of a seriously disabled child, and the legal, medical, family, and financial problems resulting from SBS.

- **NEVER** leave your child alone with a person who has a history of violence, problems controlling their anger or who has been drinking or taking drugs. This will make it less likely they can care for your baby safely.

- Share the information in this brochure with everyone who cares for your child. Young men are involved in up to 75% of reported shaking cases, so be sure to let your partner, boyfriend or any male caregiver know **NEVER** to shake, slam, hit, throw or yell at your baby if frustrated with their crying or fussiness. Tell them, **"It's okay to STEP AWAY, RIGHT AWAY, and calm down."** Gently place the baby on his or her back in the crib, close the door, and go to another room away from the crying. Take time out and relax. Tell them they can call you and you won't be upset. You would rather return home than risk your child being injured because of their frustration.

The good news is that you can prevent SBS and help keep your infant safe! Share the life-saving information in this brochure with all your child's caregivers.

Contact us for additional free brochures at
1-800-CHILDREN or visit **www.masskids.org.**

This brochure was written and produced by the
Shaken Baby Prevention Center at

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INFANT CRYING AND SOOTHING:
What You Need To Know To Keep Your Baby Safe

MASSACHUSETTS SBS Prevention Center

When Your Baby Cries

Babies are a great joy to their parents and those who care for them! Sometimes though their crying can be challenging. Learning the facts about infant crying and ways to soothe your baby can help when crying becomes difficult to cope with.

- **Crying is a baby's way of communicating his or her needs.** Babies don't cry to make their parents angry or frustrated. They're not telling you you're a bad parent or trying to ruin your day or night. Babies just cry, sometimes a lot, and if you know that, it can make it much easier to get through the difficult times.

- **Infant crying usually begins to increase at 2 weeks of age, peaks around 2 months and gradually starts to decrease after that.** Crying, even a lot of crying is normal in our culture. Bouts of a half-hour or more, totaling 2 to 3 hours a day, can occur with some babies. This can be distressing, especially when infants are difficult to soothe.

- **Crying can happen for no clear reason and can be unpredictable.** Some babies seem to cry more during certain times of the day, such as late afternoon or early evening. This time can be especially trying to parents and caregivers. Knowing about infant soothing and support from family and friends can be especially important for you and your baby at this time.

Soothing Your Infant

Here are questions to ask when your baby is crying and needs comforting:

- **Does your baby's diaper need changing?** You should know that a fussy baby might cry even more during the changing, but don't be alarmed. Usually he or she will calm down once dry and more comfortable.

- **Does your baby seem too warm or cold to the touch?** If too warm, remove some blankets or loosen clothing. If cold, add a blanket and some socks.

- **Does your baby need to be fed?** While it's good not to overfeed, sometimes babies may need just a little extra milk to make them settle down. Try burping your baby, too.

- **Does your baby seem ill to you?** If so, call your pediatrician or health clinic promptly and get advice.

Sometimes babies cry because they just need some cuddly comfort. Here are ways to help you and your baby feel close and that have been found to reduce crying by half!

- **Breastfeed your baby if you are able.** Babies fed on-demand cry less, especially during the day, than babies fed on a 4-hour schedule.

- **Carry your baby frequently and in an upright position throughout the day.** Many parents enjoy "wearing" their baby in a cloth sling or baby-holder. Babies respond well to the constant closeness and movement.

- **Hold your baby's bare skin against your own.** You might find that both of you are comforted by the warm, cozy, skin-to-skin contact.

- **Respond to your baby promptly -** within a minute or less - when he cries or fusses...and also when he's alert and happy. Babies benefit from all this attention. It won't ever spoil them and it may reduce some of the crying. Ask family and friends to stay with you or visit often, especially during the first few months when crying increases and peaks, so they can help give your baby this special attention.

Here are more soothing tips that many parents report help them comfort their crying babies. They are called:

The 5 S's

- **First, try Swaddling:** Wrap your fussy baby with arms down in a light, snuggly blanket (42" square is best.) Don't overheat your baby or put him to sleep with loose blankets that can wrap around the face.

- **Next, try Side or Stomach Position:** When your baby is fussy, you might find she calms faster if you hold her in your arms, or on your lap on her side or stomach. When putting her to sleep, however, NEVER place her on her stomach or side – only on her back. This will greatly reduce the risk of SIDS.

- **Now you're ready for Shushing:** This is magic for some babies. Make a shushing sound louder than the baby's crying so you'll be sure she can hear you, or turn on a hair dryer safely away from the baby. You can buy a "white noise" machine or CD of these sounds to play for your fussy baby or to help her sleep.

- **Next is Swinging:** Babies love motion like rocking chairs and going for walks. Wear your baby in a cloth sling or baby holder. When your little one gets upset, hold him close, support his head, and try a little dancing. Fussy babies love tiny, jiggly movements.

- **Now add Sucking:** Babies love to suck. Offer your crying baby your breast, finger or a pacifier.

The 5Ss written by and printed with permission from Harvey Karp, MD.
Visit thehappiestbaby.com to learn more about these soothing tips.