A Life in Your Hands: Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome
THE NEWBORN CHANNEL PRESENTS: A LIFE IN YOUR HANDS: PREVENTING SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

Introduction:

Actor Portraying Father  You’re alright. You’re fine. Please stop. Come here. Just stop. Stop that right now, ok?? Stop that! Stop that!!

Coleman’s Grandfather
In a matter of seconds.

Dawson’s Father
In absolute seconds.

Mark Dias, MD, FAAP, FAANS, Professor of Neurosurgery, Penn State Hershey Medical Center
The moment of rage.

Cynthia’s Father
Within seconds.

Coleman’s Grandfather
Coleman’s life was shattered.

Dawson’s Father
Dawson’s going to probably have to have somebody looking after him the rest of his life.

Cynthia’s Father
And we can’t undo it. Once it’s done, it’s done.

Mark Dias, MD, FAAP, FAANS; Professor of Neurosurgery, Penn State Hershey Medical Center
Sometimes when parents or other caregivers become so frustrated or angry with their infant they will shake them, or slam them against an object, or throw them down.

Narrator
Injuries from Shaken Baby Syndrome can include: braid damage, blindness, paralysis, seizures, fractures, spinal cord injury, learning disabilities, or death. No amount of shaking is ever okay. Vigorous shaking, even for a few moments, can injure or kill a baby.

Young babies are very susceptible to injury because their head is large compared to their body. Their neck muscles are very weak and their brain is not yet developed. Violent infant shaking can cause the baby’s head to whip back and forth, or around uncontrollably. The brain shifts inside of the skull and can be injured. Tiny blood vessels can tear and cause bleeding in the baby’s brain and on its surface.
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Shaking can also damage the baby’s eyes, causing bleeding in the retina that can lead to loss of vision or permanent blindness.

The force of an angry adult shaking an infant can cause injury to the ligaments and muscles of the spine, as well as damage to the spinal cord and nerves. Almost ¾ of infants who die from shaking have injuries to the neck or spinal cord.

When the baby’s chest is squeezed during violent shaking ribs can break, especially in the back where they connect to the baby’s spine.

These are all very serious, potentially life-threatening injuries.

Coleman’s Story

Coleman’s Grandfather

Coleman was a premature baby, typically healthy, normal child. He was released to his mother and his father, which was my son. On the day that Coleman was shaken, was that he was crying non-stop. My son became frustrated and lost control, and shook Coleman. According to the doctors, they thought that Coleman seizured somewhere between 24 and I believe 48 hours before he was taken to the hospital. My son did not admit to shaking him, though at that point there was, from my understanding, many stories prior to him finally confessing to shaking Coleman.

Mark Dias, MD, FAAP, FAANS; Professor of Neurosurgery, Penn State Hershey Medical Center

Seventy five percent of the people who do this are parents, and sixty percent of those are fathers and father figures. As a father who experienced that anger first hand, I can understand how dads react to infant crying and how easy it might be to lose your temper. But as a dad speaking to other dads, you need to understand that you need to put the baby down, you need to walk away, and you need to get control over your emotions and your anger before you pick that baby up again.

Cynthia’s Story

Cynthia’s Father

I tell people that I have three daughters: two on Earth and one in Heaven. Cynthia was born on March 14th. Born happy, healthy, and safe. Immediately my heart overflowed with joy. Cynthia was placed in the care of a NY State certified child care provider who we had known for many, many years. Some would say that she was the best friend of Cynthia’s mother. At eight months of age, on November 17th, 2000, Cynthia was violently shaken and would suffer massive brain damage. Cynthia was rushed to a hospital by her mother, and brought into the ER. They tried everything medically possible but no more could be done, so she was pronounced dead at 6:59pm that day. We didn’t know. I mean, this was again a classic case. There were no outward signs of any injuries or abrasions – no anything.
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Carroll Rottmund, RN, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program
Babies who have been shaken may not survive. For those who do survive, they may face a lifetime of medical problems. They may never realize their full potential as a human being. Family life can be forever changed. There may be loss of a job, divorce, separation from family, and jail time.

Dawson’s Story

Dawson’s Father
Something just spiraled out of control on that Friday. The caregiver had called 911. We could hear Dawson crying, and parents know their child’s cry.

Dawson
She shook me, and umm, my head was bleeding inside me.

Dawson’s Father
When the doctor says “we need to have surgery”, we were kind of like, “well you go do what you need to do”. But he said, “Somebody did this to your son”. And he said, “You need to go find out about Shaken Baby Syndrome because this is really serious, and this is going to turn your lives upside down”.

Kelly Cappos, RN, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program
Having a baby changes your life. And taking care of that baby is a full time job, and a lifetime responsibility. And even the most patient, experienced parents can sometimes get tired or frustrated, or have a bad day. So that’s why it’s important for all parents to have a plan to help them soothe their crying infant and to help calm themselves if they feel like they may be out of control. All babies cry – it’s what they do, it’s how they communicate. And some babies cry a lot in the first four months of life. And some are very difficult to console.

Why Do Babies Cry?

Narrator
When babies cry it could mean that they are hungry, tired, need to be changed, or want to be held. Or the baby could be sick, lonely, too hot or too cold, or doing what comes naturally.

How Do I Calm a Crying Baby?

Narrator
There are a number of things caregivers can do to calm a crying baby. Try: changing the diaper or clothing, feeding, burping, rocking, walking and swaying. You can also try
talking or singing softly, offering a pacifier, running a vacuum cleaner or plain white noise, checking for illness, and calling your baby’s doctor if necessary.

**Kelly Cappos, RN, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program**

It doesn’t mean you’re a bad parent if you can’t get your baby to stop crying. It’s okay to ask for help, and it’s okay to put your crying baby down in a safe spot, walk away, and come back when you’re calm.

**Narrator**

When you are feeling frustrated with infant crying, you can: put the baby down in a safe place and walk away, step outside for a short time and call a friend or family member, check back on the baby when you are calm, ask for help from someone you trust, take a break and talk out your frustration, watch TV, listen to music, or text someone.

Some caregivers find that exercising, playing music, or searching for parenting tips online can help them cope with the crying.

Hospital and community parenting groups, crying DVDs, and childcare books can all be excellent resources for new parents.

If none of these things help please remember you are not alone. Please call 1-800-4-A-CHILD. This national parenting helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to answer your questions, provide you with support, and direct you to the services in your area.

**Kelly Cappos, RN, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program**

The good news is your baby will grow so fast and the crying won’t last forever.

**How Can I Choose a Safe Caregiver for My Child?**

**Ian M. Paul, MD; Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Penn State Hershey Medical Center and the Penn State Children’s Hospital**

I look for caregivers that have experience taking care of children, or being around children, or helping with the care of children. People that are mature, have a good temperament are calm, able to figure things out on their own and problem solve. Certainly not someone who has got a drug or alcohol problem, or has violence in their background.

**Mark Dias, MD, FAAP, FAANS; Professor of Neurosurgery, Penn State Hershey Medical Center**

You know, although it can happen to anyone, there are certainly people who you look at and you know that they’re more likely to do this. People who have anger management issues, people who have known violent tendencies, people who are victims of child abuse when they were little.
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Carroll Rottmund, RN, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program
No baby ever died from crying, but they can die from being shaken.

Mark Dias, MD, FAAP, FAANS; Professor of Neurosurgery, Penn State Hershey Medical Center
You have responsibility for your baby. Your baby is completely helpless.

Kelly Cappos, RN, Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program
Please don’t ever shake, slam, or throw your baby. A momentary lapse of control can change your life and your baby’s life forever.

Cynthia’s Father
A message to parents is: you’re the parent, you’re the caregiver. Never take crying personal. That’s your baby’s way of telling you that there’s something wrong.

Coleman’s Grandfather
All I can say is Coleman got a life sentence. And I said in reality I got a life sentence, by choice, but I didn’t know at that point – I didn’t realize at that point - that my son got a life sentence also. He’s not behind bars for life, but he’ll live with this the rest of his life.

This program was reviewed by

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For a transcript of this program please visit our website @ www.thenewbornchannel.com