What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?
When a baby is vigorously shaken, the head moves back and forth. This sudden whiplash motion can cause bleeding inside the head and increased pressure on the brain, resulting in injury to the baby. This is known as Shaken Baby Syndrome and is one of the leading forms of fatal child abuse. A baby’s head and neck are susceptible to head trauma because his or her muscles are not fully developed and the brain tissue is exceptionally fragile. Head trauma is the leading cause of disability among abused infants and children.

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs most frequently in infants younger than six months old, yet can occur up to the age of three. Often there are no obvious outward signs of injury. In reality, shaking a baby, if only for a few seconds, can injure the baby for life. These injuries can include brain swelling and damage, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, developmental delays, blindness, hearing loss, paralysis, and death. When a child is shaken in anger and frustration, the force on the brain is five or ten times what it would be if the child had simply tripped and fallen.

The Letters in PURPLE stand for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>Peak of Crying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your baby may cry more each week, the most in month 2, then less in months 3-5.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U</th>
<th>Unexpected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crying can come and go and you don’t know why.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Resists Soothing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>Pain-Like Face</th>
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<tr>
<td>A crying baby may look like they are in pain, even when they are not.</td>
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<th>L</th>
<th>Long Lasting</th>
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<td>Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>Evening</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.</td>
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*The word Period means that the crying has a beginning and an end.

Early Increase Crying is Normal
It may seem like your baby cries more than other babies but remember:

- At about 2 weeks of age, babies may start to cry more each week.
- During the second month, babies usually cry more than at any other time.
- After 2 months, babies begin to cry less each week.

Babies can still be healthy and normal even if they cry five hours a day. It may be frustrating, but the Period of PURPLE crying will come to an end.

Ways to Comfort Your Crying Baby
When your baby cries, there are things you can try to comfort him/her.

- Check to see if your baby is hungry, tired, or needs changing.
- Walk and sing with your baby.
- Give your baby a warm bath.
- Take your baby for a walk or a ride in the car.
- Hold your baby close to you with skin-to-skin contact.
These ideas won’t work every time. You may be able to reduce your baby’s crying by about 50%, but soothing won’t work all the time. Remember, you can always check your doctor to see if there is something wrong that is causing the crying.

**Important Action Steps: When the Crying is Frustrating**

1. Carry, Comfort, Walk and Talk with your baby
   a. When your baby is crying, try all you can to comfort him/her. You will be able to stop the crying sometimes, but not always.
2. If it’s too frustrating it is OK to WALK AWAY
   a. Put your baby in a safe place and take a few minutes to calm yourself, then go back and check on the baby.
3. NEVER shake or hurt a baby.

**Why Crying is Frustrating to You**

- Your baby cried more than you expected
- This is harder than you thought
- Your baby won’t stop crying no matter what you try
- You feel like you are a bad parent or that you are doing something wrong
- You are tired and feel guilty that you can’t take care of your baby
- You feel like a failure

Feeling angry or upset is OK. It’s what you do with your anger that is important. Take a break from the crying and take care of yourself too. Sometimes a parent gets so angry or frustrated because of the crying, they lose control and without thinking, shake their baby.

**Why is Shaking a Baby so Dangerous?**

Crying is the number one reason parents shake and hurt their baby. Shaking a baby can happen when a parent or caregiver becomes frustrated with a crying baby and shakes him back and forth, saying something like, “Why won’t you stop crying?”

Shaking a baby is very dangerous and can cause:

- Blindness
- Seizures
- Death
- Learning disabilities
- Physical Disabilities

**Be Sure to Tell Others**

1. Tell everyone who might care for your baby about the Period of PURPLE crying
2. Tell them how normal crying is and how frustrating it can be
3. Talk about the dangers of shaking a baby
4. Tell them it is OK to put the baby down and take a break
5. Tell them it is OK to call you if it is too frustrating

Be careful who you have care for your baby, especially in the first 5 months of life. If the person caring for your baby has problems handling frustration or has a quick temper, it may be dangerous to leave your baby with that person.
When a Child Cries, Take a Break—Don’t Shake!

Taking care of an infant can be challenging, especially when an end to the crying seems nowhere in sight. If you have tried to calm the baby’s crying but nothing seems to work, it’s crucial to stay in control of your temper. Remember, it is NEVER okay to shake, throw, or hit a baby or child. If you feel as though you could lose control:

- Take a deep breath and count to 10 or 20.
- Take time out and let the baby cry alone in a safe place like a crib.
- Call someone close to you for emotional support.
- Call your pediatrician. There may be a medical reason why the baby is crying.

Resource:
National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome: http://www.dontshake.org/