

Prevention of non-accidental head trauma and SBS

Prevention of non-accidental head trauma and Shaken Baby Syndrome is achievable. Some states have mandated that hospital staff provide parental teaching about the hazards of shaking infants prior to discharging newborn babies home with their families. Different educational materials, such as pamphlets, teaching sessions and videos have been developed for this purpose. Different methods have been devised to assist parents with developing a personal plan to manage their own stress and to prevent child abuse when parents find themselves frustrated, tired or angry. Assisting a parent or caregiver with developing a plan for anticipating what they will do if the baby doesn't stop crying or misbehaves are methods of preventing over-reaction to stressful situations. Plans to prevent child abuse include teaching parents how to assess the baby to determine the reason for crying, such as assessing for hunger, wet diapers, fever or pain; then placing the baby in a safe area, like the crib, and leaving the room for 10 minutes to calm down if the infant continues to cry despite not being ill or uncomfortable. The plan should include determining who to contact in a time of need, the parent may call someone to come and assist by providing respite during a stressful time. Also the parents should agree not to hold their baby during an argument or stressful moment if they feel they are at risk for losing control of their tempers.

Teaching parents and caregivers how to recognize the signs of possible abuse and to develop a plan for response to abuse and what to do if they suspect it, will help prevent future abuse of a child from continuing. Teaching parents the importance of not ignoring stress and irritability in each other while caring for the children, especially when one parent is primarily providing the child care in the absence of the other. Single parents need help raising their families. Assisting with helping single parents learn to ask for help and develop a plan for who to contact will prevent child abuse. Provision of hotline resources and support service contact information is important to provide families with timely resources to cope and prevent child abuse.

It is important for caregivers of infants and children to have adequate rest and a supportive environment. Feelings of stress and frustration are normal while caring for infants and children, however acting out in a harmful way towards the infant or child is not acceptable. The caregiver should focus on developing an abuse-prevention plan for dealing with feelings of stress and frustration that may emerge in the presence of the infant or the child. The abuse-prevention plan should include a cooling off period and developing an effective coping behavior that prevents physical abuse from occurring. It is best for families to be proactive and make an effort to provide a supportive environment for caregivers with children by assisting with childcare and allowing the caregiver respite. And the

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caregiver should not hesitate to ask family members and friends to assist with childrearing. It takes more than one person to care for an infant or raise a child. If you or someone you know has difficulty managing anger than utilizing community programs may be necessary if the family is not supportive. Encourage parents not to hesitate to contact an organization in their community to assist them with childcare and respite issues. Encourage parents and caregivers to seek assistance if they feel overwhelmed by stress. If you know someone that has expressed frustration and is feeling overwhelmed, reach out and assist in any way that you can. Communication is essential to preventing child abuse. Seeking assistance before an injury occurs is not a crime.