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*Listening, learning,  
and living together:  
it's the science of life.*

## Shaken Baby Syndrome<sup>1</sup>

*Donna Davis and Susanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

Shaken baby syndrome is a term we've come to hear too often in news reports. It's an entirely preventable form of child abuse, caused by frustration or a lack of experience in caring for infants.

Caring for an infant can be challenging. It can be difficult to know why a baby's crying, or how fragile babies really are. A baby's cries can be unnerving to people unaccustomed to the sound. In an effort to stop the crying, a caretaker may pick up the baby and, out of frustration and anger, shake the baby to quiet it. But babies have big heads and their neck muscles are too weak to support the head. Shaking a baby rattles the brain, which can result in brain damage, blindness, or even death.

Experts from the Child Abuse Prevention Project offer a few suggestions on ways a parent can quiet their nerves when caring for a crying baby.

Consider offering the baby a pacifier. Take the baby for a ride in a stroller or in a car. Put the baby in a safe place and walk away. Be sure to check on the baby every ten minutes or so.

1. This document is FAR0410, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published March 2009. In the interest of time or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Donna Davis, Senior Producer, Family Album Radio, and Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Reviewed by Annie McPherson, College of Medicine Child Abuse Prevention Program, University of Florida.

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The baby will stop crying eventually. Or, ask a trusted friend or relative to relieve you for a short time. Remember, it's okay to ask for help. Parenting is hard work, after all.

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To listen to the radio broadcast:

[http://www.radiosource.net/radio\\_stories/shaken.mp3](http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/shaken.mp3)

[http://www.radiosource.net/radio\\_stories/shaken.wav](http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/shaken.wav)

## **Resources**

The Child Abuse Prevention Project: <http://capp.peds.ufl.edu/>