Shaken Baby Syndrome
Donna Davis and Suzanna Smith

Transcribed from the Family Album Radio Program, a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you’d like to learn more, please visit our website at familyalbumradio.org

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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. 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.wav

**Resource**