



## Shaken Baby Syndrome and AHT

April is [National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#), a reminder that we can all play a role in our communities to support the well-being of children and families, and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Shaken baby syndrome or abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT) refers to the serious brain injury that can occur if an infant or toddler is forcefully shaken or if he/she experiences blunt impact to the head. According to the [National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome](#), approximately a quarter of infants who are shaken die from their injuries, and 80% suffer long-term health consequences such as hearing and vision problems, developmental delays, and physical and learning disabilities. It only takes a few seconds of violent shaking to cause severe injury or death.

Most cases of SBS/AHT are in infants less than six months old. Parents or caregivers who admit they have shaken their baby say they did it out of frustration or anger that the baby would not stop crying.

Possible signs and symptoms of SBS/AHT may include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Seizures
- Paralysis
- Inability to lift head
- Unequal size of pupils
- Extreme fussiness and irritability



## Preventing SBS/AHT

Preventing SBS/AHT and other forms of child abuse involves support for children and parents, such as educating parents and caregivers about what to do when infants won't stop crying, respite care for caregivers who are overwhelmed or dealing with their own mental health or substance use issues, and increased public awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect.

A supportive and stable family environment and social networks can help keep children safe from harm. Parents and caregivers with nurturing parenting skills and understanding of children's needs, help from other caring adults, and access

to adequate health care and social services are other [protective factors](#).

If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, mental health care for children or adults, or primary care, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.

