



Matching Assistance Program

This is another letter in a series of emails being created to help understand some of the common diagnosis of children within the foster care system.

One diagnosis will be sent each week to help inform you of the various medical needs of the children in foster care.

The term "special needs" is applied to any condition that may make it harder for a child to be adopted.

Kids with special needs may have a mental, physical, or psychological problem.

Children in foster care comprise some of our most medically at-risk and vulnerable children.

As the result of various circumstances, including poor prenatal care, maternal substance use, and erratic past medical care, these children may have significant

Shaken Baby Syndrome

January 2011

What is Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS)?

Shaken baby syndrome is a type of inflicted traumatic brain injury that happens when a baby is violently shaken. A baby has weak neck muscles and a large, heavy head. Shaking makes the fragile brain bounce back and forth inside the skull and causes bruising, swelling, and bleeding, which can lead to permanent, severe brain damage or death. The characteristic injuries of shaken baby syndrome are subdural hemorrhages (bleeding in the brain), retinal hemorrhages (bleeding in the retina), damage to the spinal cord and neck, and fractures of the ribs and bones. These injuries may not be immediately noticeable. Symptoms of shaken baby syndrome include extreme irritability, lethargy, poor feeding, breathing problems, convulsions, vomiting, and pale or bluish skin. Shaken baby injuries usually occur in children younger than 2 years old, but may be seen in children up to the age of 5. <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/shakenbaby/shakenbaby.htm>

Is there any treatment?

Emergency treatment for a baby who has been shaken usually includes life-sustaining measures such as respiratory support and surgery to stop internal bleeding and bleeding in the brain. Doctors may use brain scans, such as MRI and CT, to make a more definite diagnosis.

What is the prognosis?

In comparison with accidental traumatic brain injury in infants, shaken baby injuries have a much worse prognosis. Damage to the retina of the eye can cause blindness. The majority of infants who survive severe shaking will have some form of neurological or mental disability, such as cerebral palsy or mental retardation, which may not be fully apparent before 6 years of age. Children with shaken baby syndrome may require lifelong medical care.

Children who survive may have:

- partial or total blindness
- hearing loss
- seizures
- developmental delays
- impaired intellect
- speech and learning difficulties
- problems with memory and attention
- severe mental retardation
- cerebral palsy

Even in milder cases, in which babies look normal immediately after the shaking, they may eventually develop one or more of these problems. Sometimes the first sign of a problem isn't noticed until the child enters the school system and exhibits behavioral problems or learning difficulties. But by that time, it's more difficult to link these problems to a shaking incident from several years before.

Shaken Baby Syndrome can occur from as little as 5 seconds of shaking. Shaken baby injuries usually occur in children younger than the age of 2, but may be seen in children up to the age of 5.

What research is being done?

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), and other institutes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), conduct research related to shaken baby syndrome in laboratories at the NIH and also support additional research through grants to major medical institutions across the country. Much of this research focuses on finding better ways to treat and heal medical conditions such as shaken baby syndrome.

Other great resources for SBS:

<http://www.dontshake.org/>

unrecognized or under-treated illnesses, immunization delays, failure to thrive, and dental caries. Mental health concerns secondary to removal from the family unit are also common.

Developmental delay that is secondary to one of the above risk factors or the result of parental deprivation occurs in about half of all children who are less than age three when they enter foster care.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaken_baby_syndrome

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/brain/shaken.html>

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