

Child Abuse & Neglect Tips

"DID YOU KNOW?"

Did you know that Shaken **Baby Syndrome** is now termed **Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)**?

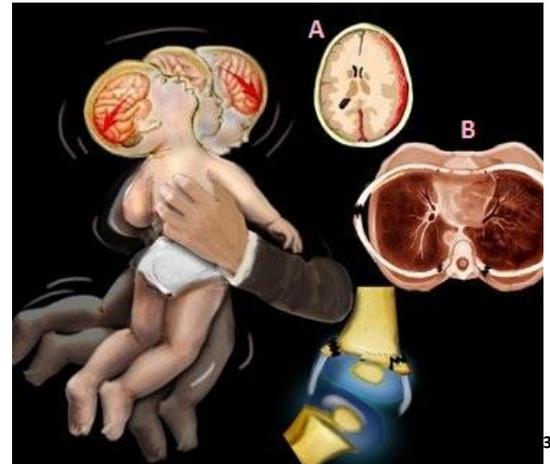
In 2009, the American Academy of Pediatrics changed the terminology to account for an increased understanding of the mechanisms of this type of trauma, which include¹:

- Shaking,
- Blunt impact, or a
- Combination of forces.

Infants and young children have relatively large heads with poor neck support and are most prone to head injuries by direct impact or shaking. **Head injuries are the most common cause of death from abuse**, with infants under 1 year being at the highest risk. **Most (80%) deaths from head trauma in children under the age of 2 are a result of abuse.**

All of the following injuries are consistent with Abusive Head Trauma:

- Retinal hemorrhages (bleeding in the back of the eyes which is seen in 75% - 90% of cases),
- Posterior rib fractures (rib fractures near the backbone – **label B** in illustration),
- Subdural hematomas (bleeding underneath the covering of the brain – **label A** in illustration), and/or
- Brain stem injury (this is the part of the brain that controls heart rate and breathing).



PRACTICE TIP: MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS AND/OR CONSULTATION BY A PHYSICIAN, WITH EXPERTISE IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, ARE REQUIRED FOR A HEAD INJURY RESULTING IN SKULL FRACTURES, IMPACT TO THE SKULL AND/OR SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME. THE EXAMINATION OR CONSULTATIONS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LOCAL CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS AND MAY ALSO BE PERFORMED AT A MEDICAL CENTER WHERE THE CHILD IS LOCATED.

The above clinical findings frequently reveals **little or no evidence of external trauma.**

There is often delay in seeking medical care and a common history is that the infant “went to sleep, but didn’t wake-up”.

Confessions from the perpetrators are uncommon; however, one study found that 62.5% of confessions stated they shook the infant in an “extremely violent” manner, and repeatedly (2 to 30 times) because it “stopped the infant’s crying”.²

¹ Christian CW, Block R, and the Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect. Abusive Head Trauma in Infants and Children. Pediatrics 2009;123:1409-1411

² Adamsbaum C, Grabar S, Mejean N, Rey-Salmon C. Abusive Head Trauma: Judicial Admissions Highlight Violent and Repetitive Shaking. Pediatrics 2010;126:546-555

³ The Radiology Assistant, Non Accidental Trauma by Simon Robben, Radiology Department of the Maastricht University Hospital in the Netherlands