

Prevention of abusive head trauma during COVID-19

The Challenges of COVID-19

The ability to cope with stress depends on the controllability of the stressor. The measures to contain and delay the spread of COVID19 are already presenting major stressors for families which they cannot control e.g.

- Loss of income
- Self isolation with children and potentially at risk adults
- Social distancing restrictions on activities which might lessen stress (e.g. sports, social engagement and entertainment, celebrations)

- Social distancing restrictions on activities which might enhance support and coping (e.g support groups, children/ baby groups and classes, baby clinics).

We need to think about this every time we meet a family with a baby and to talk the fathers or males in the household as well as mothers about how they are feeling and coping and give them the icon message

Help them to think about what they will do if they are feeling overwhelmed.

- AHT is often triggered by caregiver's lack of ability to cope with a crying baby
- Risk is increased at times of stress within families
- There is an association between economic hardship and the incidence of AHT.

This may stop a moments loss of control ending in the catastrophic injury or death of a baby..

The icon website has useful information for families and professionals. Please look at these and share to get the message out there.

The ICON approach

Infant crying is normal and it will stop!

Babies start to cry from around 2 weeks of age

The crying may get more frequent and last longer.

After about 8 weeks of age babies start to cry less each week.



Comfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop.

Think about are they:

- hungry
- tired
- in need of a nappy change

Try simple calming techniques such as singing to the baby or going for a walk.

It's **O**K to walk away if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.

After a few minutes when you are feeling calm, go back and check on the baby.

Never, ever shake or hurt a baby.

It can cause lasting brain damage or death.

If you are worried that your baby is unwell contact your GP or call NHS 111.



What can parents do to help their babies?

Comfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop.

Babies can cry for reasons such as if they are hungry, tired, wet/dirty or if they are unwell.

Check these basic needs and try some simple calming techniques:

- ➔ Talk calmly, hum or sing to your baby
- ➔ Let them hear a repeating or soothing sound
- ➔ Hold them close – skin to skin
- ➔ Go for a walk outside with your baby
- ➔ Give them a warm bath

These techniques may not always work. It may take a combination or more than one attempt to soothe your baby.

If you think there is something wrong with your baby or the crying won't stop speak to your GP, Midwife or Health Visitor. If you are worried that your baby is unwell call NHS 111.

What if the crying won't stop?

Not every baby is easy to calm but that doesn't mean you are doing anything wrong. Don't get angry with your baby or yourself.

Instead, put your baby in a safe place and walk away so that you can calm yourself down by doing something that takes your mind off the crying. Try:

- ➔ Listening to music, doing some exercises or doing something that calms you.
- ➔ Call a relative or friend – they may be able to help you calm or may be able to watch your baby.



What not to do

Handling a baby roughly will make them more upset. Shouting or getting angry with your baby will make things worse.

Sometimes parents and people looking after babies get so angry and frustrated with a baby's cry they lose control.

They act on impulse and shake their baby.

Shaking or losing your temper with a baby is very dangerous and can cause:

- ➔ Blindness
- ➔ Learning disabilities
- ➔ Seizures
- ➔ Physical disabilities
- ➔ Death

Remember – This phase will stop! Be an ICON for your baby and cope with their crying.

- I** Infant crying is normal and it will stop
- C** Comfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop
- O** It's OK to walk away if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you
- N** Never ever shake or hurt a baby

Coping with Crying: My Personal ICON Plan

I Infant crying is normal - remember: babies cry, you can cope.

C **Comfort methods I can try...**

Think about if the baby is hungry, tired, in need of a nappy change or unwell? Consider skin to skin contact, singing a lullaby or taking a walk outside....



Who will I call if the crying won't stop?

(Include contact numbers: friends, family, midwife, health visitor & GP)



What will I do if I need a few minutes to myself? What makes me feel better?



O Remember: It's OK to walk away if you are feeling stressed. Return to check the baby after a few minutes

N Never ever shake or hurt a baby

Keep this plan somewhere where you can easily access it.

For more information see www.ICONCOPE.org



Share the ICON message!

It isn't just parents who get frustrated at a baby's cry. Think very carefully about who you ask to look after your baby.

Share the ICON message with anyone who may look after your baby.

Check that caregivers understand about how to cope with crying before you decide to leave your baby with them and share this ICON leaflet with them.

Reminder about Safe Sleeping:

- ➔ The safest place for your baby to sleep is a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you for the first 6 months, even during the day.
- ➔ When putting your baby down for a sleep, place them on their back, with their feet at the foot end of the cot.
- ➔ Don't let them get too hot – 16-20 degrees celsius is comfortable.
- ➔ It is dangerous to sleep with a baby on a sofa or in an armchair, never do this.
- ➔ Make sure that your baby is not exposed to cigarette smoke, as this increases their risk of cot death.

You can talk to your Midwife or Health Visitor about all aspects of crying and safe sleeping.

Further information and support

Maternity Advice Line

Tel: **0300 422 5541**

Community Midwives

Numbers on front of orange notes.

Contact until discharge from Community Midwifery Care.

Health Visitors

Numbers in Child Health Record (Red Book).

Early Help Front Door

If you have a concern about a family member and need support.

Tel: **01452 328 584**

Bliss Help Line

Supports families whose babies have been born prematurely.

Tel: **0808 801 0322**

CRY-SIS

Support for parents who are experiencing problems with babies who cry excessively or who have sleeping problems.

Tel: **08451 228669**

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Tel: **0808 800 5000** www.nspcc.org.uk

NHS non-emergency number

111

ICON website

www.iconcope.org

