

## How babies like to be held

## What Babies don't like



Cuddled up close to you



Lying on top of your chest



With your arm around his tummy, and his back against your body



Upright looking over your shoulder, with her head supported



Cradled lengthways in your arms - a perfect position for smiling and talking to each other



In a sling - a useful way of keeping close to your baby, with your arms free to do other things.

Babies also like stroking and gentle massage.

**Most of all, babies need to have their heads and necks carefully supported.**

- ✗ Being held with their heads or backs unsupported
- ✗ Being held at arms length - this makes babies feel insecure
- ✗ Any rough handling, such as being gripped too tightly or having a bottle or dummy pushed into their mouths
- ✗ Being picked up very suddenly
- ✗ Very rough play
- ✗ Shaking - this can cause **serious, permanent injuries or even death.**

### Why is it so dangerous to shake a baby?

A baby's head is big and heavy compared to the rest of its body. Unless supported, the head flops around because the neck muscles aren't yet strong enough to hold it still. Shaking makes the head move back and forth very quickly and with great force. When this happens, tiny blood vessels can tear and bleed inside the baby's brain, causing one or more of the following: ● blindness ● deafness ● fits ● learning difficulties ● brain damage, or even ● death.

### Can shaking harm older children?

The danger is greatest for babies under 12 months, but shaking can cause the same serious injuries in older babies and toddlers.

### Can other kinds of rough handling cause injuries?

Yes, particularly hitting a baby on the head. Throwing babies in the air may seem like fun, but it can be **dangerous**. Keep to gentle games until children are much older.

### Remember ...

- Babies are fragile and precious. **Never shake a baby.**
- Even if your baby seems ill or stops breathing for any reason, don't shake him as this can cause more damage. (See over for advice.)
- If you do ever lose control and shake a baby, get medical help immediately, preferably at your local hospital. A delay could be fatal.