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News Center

NC Hospitals Focus On Shaken Baby Prevention

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Photo Video



Photo By: NBC17

By Julie Henry, NBC17 Health and Fitness Reporter E-mail



RALEIGH, N.C. - Parents of every newborn in North Carolina will receive information about shaken baby syndrome as part of a \$7 million prevention project that is the first of its kind in the nation.

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Estimates are that as many as 2,000 children under two years old in the state are shaken by a caregiver; yet only about 50 children are treated in the hospital for their immediate injuries.

Child abuse prevention experts say that the primary reason people shake babies is a lack of understanding of why babies cry.

"The Period of PURPLE Crying" is an intervention program that educates parents about the reasons for crying in healthy babies. PURPLE is an acronym that represents the characteristics of normal crying infants: it Peaks at 2 months of age and ends at 4 or 5 months; is Unexpected; Resists soothing; the child appears to be in Pain; it is Long lasting (2-5 hours); and occurs more in the Evening.

At Johnston Memorial Hospital in Smithfield, new parents Daryll and Candace Warren are adjusting to life as parents. Just hours after the birth of their son Lathan, they were busy learning how to change diapers and feed their baby, things the 25-year-olds have not had to do before.

"Seems easy enough here, but when you get home, you've got to get up in the middle of the night and feed them," said Candace Warren. "I'm sure it's going to be a little overwhelming."

Parent educator Connie Godwin teaches parents what to expect from their new babies. She says parents can't get all of their information from a book, or even from other people.

"This is a learning experience. It's hands-on experience," said Godwin. "You learn as you go with your baby. So anything that you do is not particularly wrong for you. It's what you need to do for yourself and your baby."

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Godwin advises parents to ask for help from family and friends. But even the most prepared parents may find themselves at wits end when a baby won't stop crying. Doctors say that's when shaken baby syndrome is likely to occur, especially among young and inexperienced parents.

"You have somebody who's crying, it's their only way of expressing what they need, and somebody who's going to be more likely to lose control of their behavior when they're frustrated with not being able to satisfy this crying," said Vic Randolph, M.D., emergency physician at Johnston Memorial.

The parent education program will provide the parent of each of the 125,000 new babies born in North Carolina with a short video and 11-page booklet along with hospital and healthcare provider-based education. Initially, 30 hospitals in the state will receive the materials; organizers hope to reach all 90 hospitals in North Carolina that have maternity programs within five months.

The project is sponsored by Duke University Medical Center, UNC Chapel Hill's Injury Prevention Research Center and the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force. Funding for the project comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Duke Endowment.

For more information on Shaken Baby Syndrome and on prevention, click on the related links above.

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