

Safe Sleep and Your Baby:

How Parents Can Reduce the Risk of SIDS and Suffocation

Many infants die during sleep from unsafe sleep environments. Some of these deaths are from entrapment, suffocation, and strangulation. Some infants die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). However, there are ways for parents to keep their sleeping baby safe.

Read on for more information from the American Academy of Pediatrics on how parents can create a safe sleep environment for their babies. This information should also be shared with anyone who cares for babies, including grandparents, family, friends, babysitters, and child care centers.

Note: These recommendations are for healthy babies up to 1 year of age. A very small number of babies with certain medical conditions may need to be placed to sleep on their stomachs. Your baby's doctor can tell you what is best for your baby.

What you can do

- **Place your baby to sleep on his back for every sleep.** Babies up to 1 year of age should always be placed on their backs to sleep during naps and at night. However, if your baby has rolled from his back to his side or stomach on his own, he can be left in that position if he is already able to roll from tummy to back and back to tummy. If your baby falls asleep in a car safety seat, stroller, swing, infant carrier, or infant sling he should be moved to a firm sleep surface as soon as possible.
- **Place your baby to sleep on a firm sleep surface.** The crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard should meet current safety standards. Check to make sure the product has not been recalled. Do not use a crib that is broken or missing parts, or has drop-side rails. Cover the mattress that comes with the product with a fitted sheet. Do not put blankets or pillows between the mattress and the fitted sheet. Never put your baby to sleep on a chair, sofa, water bed, cushion, or sheepskin. For more information about crib safety standards, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission Web site at www.cpsc.gov.
- **Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any objects that could increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation out of the crib.** Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, bumper pads, and stuffed toys can cause your baby to suffocate. Note: Research has not shown us when it's 100% safe to have these objects in the crib; however, most experts agree that after 12 months of age these objects pose little risk to healthy babies.
- **Place your baby to sleep in the same room where you sleep but not the same bed.** Keep the crib or bassinet within an arm's reach of your bed. You can easily watch or breastfeed your baby by having your baby nearby. Babies who sleep in the same bed as their parents are at risk of SIDS, suffocation, or strangulation. Parents can roll onto babies during sleep or babies can get tangled in the sheets or blankets.
- **Breastfeed as much and for as long as you can.** Studies show that breastfeeding your baby can help reduce the risk of SIDS.

- **Schedule and go to all well-child visits.** Your baby will receive important immunizations. Recent evidence suggests that immunizations may have a protective effect against SIDS.
- **Keep your baby away from smokers and places where people smoke.** If you smoke, try to quit. However, until you can quit, keep your car and home smoke-free. Don't smoke inside your home or car and don't smoke anywhere near your baby, even if you are outside.
- **Do not let your baby get too hot.** Keep the room where your baby sleeps at a comfortable temperature. In general, dress your baby in no more than one extra layer than you would wear. Your baby may be too hot if she is sweating or if her chest feels hot. If you are worried that your baby is cold, infant sleep clothing designed to keep babies warm without the risk of covering their heads can be used.
- **Offer a pacifier at nap time and bedtime.** This helps to reduce the risk of SIDS. If you are breastfeeding, wait until breastfeeding is going well before offering a pacifier. This usually takes 3 to 4 weeks. It's OK if your baby doesn't want to use a pacifier. You can try offering a pacifier again, but some babies don't like to use pacifiers. If your baby takes the pacifier and it falls out after he falls asleep, you don't have to put it back in.
- **Do not use home cardiorespiratory monitors to help reduce the risk of SIDS.** Home cardiorespiratory monitors can be helpful for babies with breathing or heart problems but they have not been found to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- **Do not use products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS.** Products such as wedges, positioners, special mattresses, and specialized sleep surfaces have not been shown to reduce the risk of SIDS. In addition, some infants have suffocated while using these products.

What expectant moms can do

- Schedule and go to all prenatal doctor visits.
- Do not smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs while pregnant and after birth. Stay away from smokers and places where people smoke.

Remember Tummy Time

Give your baby plenty of "tummy time" when she is awake. This will help strengthen neck muscles and avoid flat spots on the head. Always stay with your baby during tummy time and make sure she is awake.

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