



SAFE SLEEP FOR YOUR BABY

As a parent or caregiver, you carry an immense responsibility for keeping your baby safe. Since babies are at risk for suffocation or SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), one of the major ways you can protect your baby from harm is to ensure that he or she has a safe place to sleep at night and during naptime.

UNDERSTANDING SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME (SIDS)

SIDS describes the unexpected and unexplained death of an infant younger than one year of age. While experts are not clear about the cause of SIDS, there are certain safety measures you can take to lower the risk of your child being suffocated or dying from SIDS. Here are a few guidelines to follow:



- ✦ Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep for naps and at night.
- ✦ Make sure nothing covers the baby's head.
- ✦ Use a firm mattress (in a safety-approved crib) covered in a fitted sheet.
- ✦ Use sleep clothing, such as a one-piece sleeper, instead of a blanket.
- ✦ Don't use pillows, blankets, sheepskin or pillow-like bumpers in your baby's sleep area.
- ✦ Keep soft objects, stuffed toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area.
- ✦ Don't let anyone smoke near your baby.
- ✦ Unless prescribed by your doctor, avoid products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS. Most have not been tested for effectiveness or safety.
- ✦ Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor or child's pediatrician.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR BABY'S SAFE SLEEP

There are other things to consider during your baby's sleep time. Some of these include:

- ✦ **Sleeping Arrangements.** To avoid the risk of suffocation, babies should sleep in their own bed and not in a bed or on a couch with adults or other children. For the first six months, place the baby's bassinet or crib near your bed. It is okay to have the baby in your bed for nursing or comforting, but for their safety, you should put the baby back in their own bassinet or crib when you are ready for sleep.
- ✦ **Soothing Your Baby.** To help soothe your baby, try giving him or her a clean pacifier each time you put them down to sleep. If you are breastfeeding, wait until your baby is at least one month old to use a pacifier. Never force your baby to take the pacifier, and if it falls out while the baby is asleep, you don't need to put it back in.
- ✦ **Avoiding Flat Spots.** Some parents worry about flat spots on their baby's head caused by too much time on their backs. You can reduce the chances of your baby getting these flat spots by limiting the time they spend in car seats, swings or other places where they are laying on their back. You can also place them on their tummy when they are awake. This "tummy time" even helps develop upper body muscles and motor skills.

For additional information about SIDS and safe sleep for your baby, visit the "Back to Sleep Campaign" section of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's website (www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS). To learn more about crib or nursery safety, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2272 or download free brochures at their website: www.cpsc.gov.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For general parenting questions, call our Helpline at 1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373). You may also send an email to: helpline@preventchildabusega.org. Becoming educated about safe sleep for babies is just one way communities can work to prevent child abuse and neglect. *Preventing child abuse is the work of everyone, every day.* Join our efforts.