



FAMILY SAFETY

Creating a Safe Sleep Environment for Your Baby

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Good sleeping habits are important for your baby's physical and emotional well-being. Babies need to sleep, and parents and caregivers want to create a safe sleep environment. But where should a child sleep? It is important to avoid dangerous situations. About 3,600 children under the age of 1 die suddenly and unexpectedly each year, and many of those infants were in an unsafe sleeping environment at the time. Creating a safe sleep environment for an infant is not difficult. It is not expensive, either.

What is Sudden Unexpected Infant Death?

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) is a term used to describe the sudden and unexpected death of a baby less than 1 year old in which the cause was not obvious before investigation. Commonly reported types of SUID include:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), defined as the sudden death of an infant that cannot be explained after a thorough investigation.
- Accidental suffocation can be the result of an unsafe sleep environment and can occur in multiple ways:
 - When an infant is on a too-soft surface, such as a waterbed, or near loose bedding, pillows or blankets, he or she may roll over into such objects and not be able to move away. Suffocation is possible.
 - Suffocation may occur when another person rolls on top of or against the sleeping infant.
 - An infant may become wedged between two objects, such as a mattress and wall, bed frame, or furniture, leading to suffocation.
- Accidental strangulation can occur when an infant's head and neck become caught between crib railings.

How to create a safe sleeping environment for your baby

- Babies should sleep on their backs for all sleep times—for naps and at night— **until the first birthday**. You should always place your baby to sleep on the back, but if your baby is comfortable rolling both ways (back to tummy, tummy to back), then you do not have to return your baby to the back.
- **Use a firm sleep surface.** A crib, bassinet, or portable crib is recommended, along with a tight-fitting, firm mattress and fitted sheet designed for that particular product. **Do not place your baby to sleep on a couch, sofa, or armchair.**
- **Room share—keep baby's sleep area in the same room where you sleep for the first 6 months or, ideally, for the first year.** Room sharing decreases the risk of SIDS by as much as 50 percent. Place your baby's crib, bassinet or portable crib in your bedroom, close to your bed.
- **Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any objects that could increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation out of the baby's sleep area.** These include pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, blankets, toys, bumper pads or similar products that attach to crib slats or sides.
- **It is fine to swaddle your baby.** However, make sure that the baby is always on his or her back when swaddled. The swaddle should not be too tight or make it hard for the baby to breathe or move his or her hips. When your baby looks like he or she is trying to roll over, you should stop swaddling.
- **You can give a pacifier at naptime and bedtime.** This helps reduce the risk of SIDS, even if it falls out after the baby is asleep. If you are breastfeeding, wait until breastfeeding is going well before offering a pacifier.
- **Do make sure your baby's bassinet, crib or play yard meets current safety standards**
- **Breastfed babies have a lower risk of SIDS.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding exclusively (without any supplementations) for about 6 months and then continue breastfeeding for at least 12 months or longer if you and your baby desire after introducing solid food. It is OK to breastfeed your baby in your bed. Before you start feeding, move any bedding and pillows from your bed in case you fall asleep. If you do

fall asleep, move your baby to his crib or bassinet as soon as you wake up. Breastfeeding your baby in bed is safer than on a sofa or cushioned chair.

What about bed-sharing?

- **Bed-sharing is not recommended for babies unless the mother is fully awake and watching the baby.** However, certain situations make bed-sharing even more dangerous. Therefore, you should not bed share with your baby if:
 - The baby is younger than 4 months old.
 - The baby was born prematurely or with low birth weight.
 - The mother or any other person in the bed is a smoker (even if you do not smoke in bed).
 - The mother of the baby smoked during pregnancy.
 - You have taken any medicines or drugs that might make it harder for you to wake up.
 - You drank any alcohol.
 - You are not the baby's parent.
 - The surface is soft, such as a waterbed, old mattress, sofa, couch, or armchair.
 - There is soft bedding, like pillows or blankets, on the bed.

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