Safe sleep for babies (preventing SIDS)

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) occurs when a baby younger than 1 year old dies without cause. SIDS affects families of all races, religions, and income. The babies seem healthy before SIDS happens.

No one knows what causes SIDS, and no product can prevent it. However, there are several ways to protect your baby and reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep accidents.

**How can I protect my baby from SIDS while they sleep?**

Follow these recommendations until your baby is at least 1 year old:

- Put your baby completely on their back while they sleep, even during naps. When babies are on their stomachs, they have a greater chance of breathing in carbon dioxide (air they have breathed out) and stopping breathing.

- Do not put your baby to sleep on their side or stomach. As they get older, babies start to roll to their stomach on their own. Once your baby can roll from their back to their stomach and then from their stomach to their back, you can let them sleep on their stomach if they roll into that position. You should still, however, put them to sleep on their back.

- Use a safe crib with no loose slats, rails, or hardware. Make sure the slats are no more than 2 3/8 inches apart by holding a soda can between the bars to see if it fits.

- Use a firm mattress that fits snugly in the crib, without any gaps between it and the side of the crib. It should not indent under your child’s head. The mattress should be covered only by a fitted sheet.

- Put your baby in close-fitting infant pajamas or sleep sacks to sleep in.

- Do not use fluffy, loose bedding, pillows, comforters, cushions, bumper pads, sheepskins, or stuffed animals in your baby’s crib.

- Avoid commercial devices like wedges and positioners to reduce SIDS. There is no proof that these devices work.

- Do not cover your baby’s face to block sounds or light or for any other reason while they sleep.

- Do not leave your baby alone to sleep on an adult bed, waterbed, couch, sofa, pillow, or cushion. Be careful not to fall asleep yourself if your baby is in bed with you. Return your baby to their own crib if there is any chance you will fall asleep.
• Do not use car seats, strollers, swings, or rockers as a place for infants to sleep. Infants can get into positions where they might suffocate in these seats. If your baby falls asleep in one of these, move them to a crib as soon as it is safe to do so.

• If your baby is in a sling or cloth carrier, be sure their head and face are not covered by the fabric or the adult’s body.

• Do not let your baby sleep in bed with you even if using a co-sleeping bed. Instead, you can keep your baby’s crib in your room until they are at least 6 months to a year old. Room sharing without bed sharing decreases the risk of SIDS by as much as 50%.

• Do not let your baby get too hot. Overheating may increase the risk of SIDS. Your baby should not wear more than one layer more than adults would wear to be comfortable in that room.

• Consider giving your baby a pacifier at bedtime or during naps. Pacifiers may decrease the risk of SIDS and do not cause breastfeeding or dental problems later. If the pacifier falls out of your baby’s mouth while they sleep, you don’t need to put it back in. Don’t use anything to attach the pacifier to your baby or their clothing.

What else can I do to reduce my baby’s risk of SIDS?

• Do not rely on home and hospital heart and breathing monitors. They do not lessen the risk of SIDS or identify infants at risk for SIDS.

• Do not let anyone smoke around your baby. This increases the risk of SIDS and may cause respiratory problems, such as asthma.

• Do not use medicine, alcohol, or drugs that may make it hard for you to wake up if your baby cries.

• Make sure your baby gets all of their immunizations. These can protect against SIDS.

• Take care of yourself while pregnant and breastfeed your baby, if possible. Doing this can protect against SIDS.

• Before you leave your baby with babysitters or daycare workers, remind them of the SIDS guidelines.

Following these guidelines can lower the chance that your baby will die of SIDS and other sleep-related accidents. If you have any questions, contact your child’s healthcare provider.

Notes