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Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Safe Sleep Practices for Babies

Sleep related deaths are one of the leading causes of death for infants between 1 month and 1 year of age. These deaths used to be called Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Now they are called Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths (SUIDs).

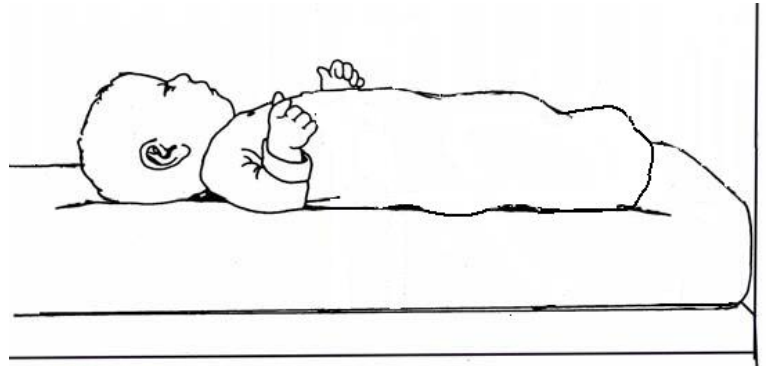
Most sleep related deaths are a preventable cause of death in infants. To make sure that your baby is sleeping safely, follow the ABC's of safe sleep (below).

The ABC's of safe sleep

Alone - Babies should always be on their own sleep surface. Bed sharing is a risk factor for SUIDs and other sleep related deaths.

Back - Babies should be on their back for every sleep.

Crib - The crib should be empty. This means no bumper pads, pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, toys or supplies, like diapers and diaper wipes.



Picture 1 Babies should be placed on their backs to sleep until they are 12 months of age.

Make a safe place to sleep

Always place your baby on their back at bedtime and at nap time (Picture 1).

- Do not put your baby to sleep on their side. Your baby will not choke if they spit up. See more information in this video about safe sleep at <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/helping-hands/safe-sleep-practices>
- Always place your baby on a firm mattress in a safe crib with a tightly fitted sheet. A safe crib is a bassinet, play-yard or crib that has the spindles no wider than 2-3/8 inches apart and sides that do not drop down.

- Never use soft bedding, comforters, pillows, loose sheets, blankets, sheepskins, toys, positioners or bumpers in the crib or sleep area. These could cause your baby to suffocate.
- If your baby changes positions in their sleep, let them stay where they are.
- Decorate your baby's room as you choose, but leave the baby's sleep space empty.
- Babies should not sleep on adult beds, couches, armchairs or other soft sleep surfaces – they should be on a firm mattress in their own sleep space.
- Babies should not sleep in car seats or swings, as they may not be able to keep their airway open. If they fall asleep while in a car seat or swing, move them to a safe sleep place.
- **Always put your baby to sleep in a separate, but close-by, safe place to sleep.**
 - **DO NOT bed share.** It can increase your baby's chance of SUIDS. Adult beds and bedding are soft and can cause the baby to suffocate, or an adult can roll over on the baby, causing suffocation.
Bed sharing includes:
 - Your baby sleeping in bed with you
 - Your baby sleeping in bed with other children
 - Your baby sleeping in bed with pets
 - **DO room share if you can.** It can help prevent SUIDS. Room sharing is when your baby sleeps in your room, on a separate, safe surface, like a bassinette, crib or portable play yard.
- Breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the risk of SUIDS. You may breastfeed your baby in bed with you, but always remember to put them back in their own separate safe place to sleep when you are finished nursing. If you fall asleep while nursing, put your baby back into their own bed as soon as you wake up.

Make a safe home environment

Never let anyone smoke around your baby. SUIDS occurs more often in babies who are around smoke than in babies who have a smoke-free environment.

Pacifier use can help prevent SUIDS.

- Offer a clean, dry pacifier to your baby at sleep times.
- Do not force your baby to use a pacifier.
- If the pacifier falls out while the baby is sleeping, you do not need to put it back in the baby's mouth.
- Do not attach a pacifier to your baby's clothing, prop the pacifier or use pacifiers attached to stuffed animals.

Keep sleeping rooms a comfortable temperature.

- If you are comfortable in the room, then your baby will be, too.
- Do not overheat your baby. Overheating may cause problems with the control the baby's brain has over breathing and waking up. Do not over-bundle your baby. They should not feel hot to the touch.
- Babies need one more layer of clothing than adults. You can put a Onesie® under the pajamas, or dress your baby in warmer pajamas than you would wear.
- Use a sleep sack or wearable blanket instead of loose blankets to keep your baby warm.

Ask your baby's health care providers about over-the-counter products.

- Do not use products that claim to reduce the risk of SUIDS, such as wedges, or baby positioners. These products have not been tested for effectiveness or safety.
- Do not use non-prescription home monitors for your baby to reduce the risk of SUIDS. If your baby has a medical reason for a monitor, the doctor will prescribe a medical home monitor for them.

Tummy time

- Stay with your baby and watch them while they do tummy time (Picture 2).
- Tummy time reduces the chance that the baby will get flat spots and bald spots on their head.
- Do tummy time **ONLY** when your baby is awake and you can stay with them.



Picture 2 A baby doing tummy time.