

## Safe Sleep Practices for Babies

Sleep related deaths are one of the leading causes of death for babies. These deaths used to be called Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Now they are called Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths (SUIDs).

A SUID can occur suddenly and unexpectedly even to babies who are healthy. SUIDs can be caused by Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), by accidental strangulation or by suffocation in a bed. Sometimes the cause of death is not known.

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.

### The ABC's of Safe Sleep:

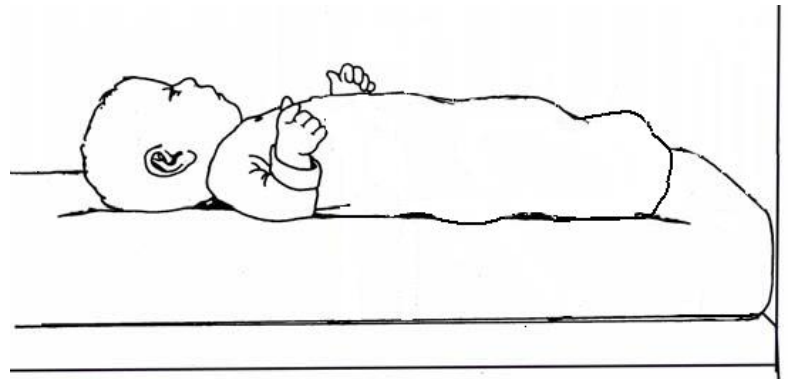
**Alone** - babies should always be on their own sleep surface. Bed sharing is a risk factor for SIDS and other sleep related deaths.

**Back** - babies should be on their backs for every sleep.

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

### Make a safe place to sleep

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



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

- Do not put your baby to sleep on his side. Your baby will not choke if he spits up.
- Always place your baby on a firm mattress with a tightly fitted sheet in a safe crib (see Helping Hand HH-IV-73, *Home Safety for Infants and Toddlers*.)
- Never use soft bedding, comforters, pillows, loose sheets, blankets, sheep skins, toys, positioners or bumpers in the crib or sleep area. These could cause your baby to suffocate.
- If your baby changes positions in his sleep, allow him to stay as he is.
- Decorate your baby's room as you choose, but leave the crib or any other place where the baby sleeps empty.
- Babies should not sleep on couches, arm chairs or other soft sleep surfaces – they should be on a firm mattress in their own sleep space.

**Always put your baby to sleep in a separate but close-by safe place to sleep.**

- Bed sharing (sleeping in your bed with your baby) increases your baby's chance of dying of sleep related infant death. Adult beds and bedding are soft and can cause the baby to suffocate, or an adult can roll over onto the baby, causing suffocation.
- Room-sharing (your baby sleeps in your room on a separate safe surface, such as a bassinet, Pack 'n Play® or other safe sleep place) is a way to help prevent SIDS.
- Breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the risk of SIDS. You may breastfeed your baby in bed with you, but always remember to put him back in his own separate safe place to sleep when you are finished nursing.

**Make a safe home environment**

**Never allow anyone to smoke around your baby.** SIDS occurs more often in babies who are exposed to smoke than in babies who have a smoke-free environment (see Helping Hand HH-IV-68, *Second-hand Smoke* and HH-37, *Stop Smoking Programs*).

**Pacifier use can help prevent SIDS.**

- 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.

## Keep sleeping rooms a comfortable temperature.

If you are comfortable in the room, then your baby will be, too.

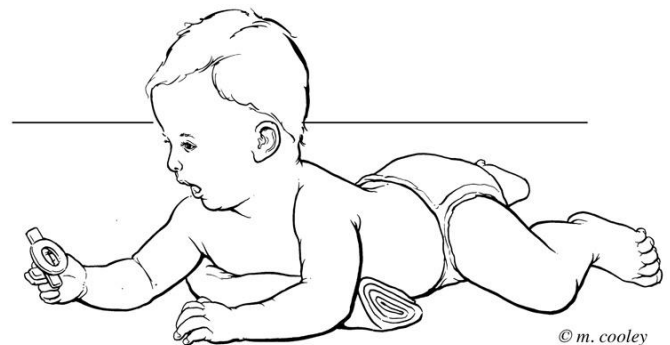
- Do not overheat your baby. Overheating may cause problems with the control the baby's brain has over breathing and waking up. Do not over-bundle your baby. He should not feel hot to the touch.
- Babies usually need one more layer of clothing than adults. You can put a Onesie® under the pajamas, or dress your baby in warmer pajamas than you would wear.
- Use a SleepSack® instead of 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 SIDS, 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 SIDS. If your baby has a medical reason for a monitor, his doctor will prescribe a medical home monitor for him.

## Tummy time

- Provide supervised tummy time for your baby (Picture 2). See Helping Hand HH-II-173, *Tummy Time*).
- Tummy time reduces the chance that the baby will get flat spots and bald spots on his head (see Helping Hand HH-I-336, *Positional Plagiocephaly (Flattened Head)*).
- Do tummy time **ONLY** when your baby is awake and you can stay with him.



**Picture 2** Baby having tummy time