

## SIDS Prevention

SIDS or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as Crib Death, refers to unexplained death during sleep in the first year of life in otherwise healthy babies. The majority of cases of SIDS occur between one and six months of age. Several factors have been identified that can decrease the chances of SIDS.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following measures to help reduce your baby's risk of SIDS.

- “Back to Sleep” - Infants who sleep on their backs have a 50% reduction in the chance of dying from SIDS. Infants who sleep on their sides have less reduction in SIDS, so only back sleeping is recommended. This applies to naps as well as nighttime. Devices such as sleeping wedges are not recommended, as babies are more likely to flip over when the devices are used.
- Use a firm sleep surface without padding. A thin sheet between baby and mattress is fine, but do not use fluffy mattress pads or sheepskin.
- Keep soft objects out of the crib. This includes stuffed animals, blankets, pillows, and quilts. There should be no loose bedding, including blankets. Use a blanket sleeper or tuck the blanket under the sides of the mattress. Soft or loosely attached bumper pads should be removed.
- Do not smoke. Infants exposed to tobacco smoke have a higher risk of SIDS.
- Infants should not sleep in the same bed as adults. A close-by but separate sleeping environment supports breastfeeding and avoids the possibility of smothering the baby. A crib or bassinet in the parents' room allows the baby to be comforted and fed on demand. The highest risk of smothering occurs when the parent is extremely tired, on medication, or using alcohol or drugs.
- Offer a pacifier during naptime and bedtime for babies between one and twelve months of age. Delay the introduction of a pacifier until four weeks of age for breastfed infants to avoid nipple confusion. Do not coat the pacifier with sweetener. Clean it often and replace the pacifier when it shows signs of wear. Do not put the pacifier on a string around the baby's neck. If the pacifier falls out of the baby's mouth during sleep, leave it out. If the baby does not want a pacifier, do not try to force him or her to take it.
- Avoid overheating. Clothe the infant lightly and avoid over bundling.
- Commercial devices to prevent SIDS have no proven benefit and are not recommended.
- Baby home monitors do not decrease the risk of SIDS and are not necessary.
- Remember to review these guidelines with your childcare giver as well. Naptime is just as important as bedtime.

Avoid flattening of the skull from back sleeping by changing the position of the baby's head and by assuring “tummy time” each day. See our handout about Flattening of the Skull.