

## 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”** - Until their first birthday, babies should be placed for sleep on their backs for all sleep times: naps and at night. Infants who sleep on their backs are much less likely of dying from SIDS. Positioning a baby on her side to sleep is not recommended. Some babies will roll onto their bellies. 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 if she rolls onto her tummy. If your baby falls asleep in a car seat, stroller, swing, infant carrier or sling; you should move her to a firm sleep surface, placed on her back, as soon as possible.
- **Use a firm sleep** surface without padding. A crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that meets the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)) should be used. 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, toys, blankets, pillows, quilts, sheepskins and bumper pads. Instead of blankets, use infant sleep clothing such as a wearable blanket.
- **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. Only bring your baby into your bed to feed or comfort. Not to sleep.
- **Room share.** Keep your baby's sleep area in the same room where you sleep for the first 6 months or, ideally for the first year. This can reduce the risk of SIDS by as much as 50%.

- **Never place your baby to sleep on a couch, sofa or armchair** – this is dangerous!
- **Offer a pacifier during naptime and bedtime.** If you are breastfeeding wait until breastfeeding is going well before offering a pacifier. This usually takes 2-3 weeks. 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 her to take it.
- **Avoid overheating.** Clothe the infant appropriately based on the temperature in your home. Avoid over bundling. Covering of the face or head should be avoided. In general, your baby needs only one layer more than you are wearing. As mentioned above, use infant sleep clothing rather than blankets.
- **Commercial devices to prevent SIDS** have no proven benefit and are not recommended. This includes wedges and positioners.
- **Baby home monitors** do not decrease the risk of SIDS and are not necessary.
- **Bedside and in-bed sleepers** have not been proven to decrease SIDS, nor have they been proven to be safe.
- 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.