

# SIDS: Safe Sleep Techniques for Your Newborn

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome – the sudden and unexplained death of a baby younger than one year old, usually while sleeping. Few things are more frightening for new parents. But parents and caregivers can help reduce the risk of SIDS by creating a safe sleep environment for baby.

The most important thing you can do is always place your baby on her back to sleep, both during naps and at night. This is the safest sleep position and the one recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. If your baby rolls from her back to her side or stomach on her own, she can be left in that position.

Make sure all caregivers, including grandparents, know that the only way to put your baby to sleep is on his back. If your newborn has certain medical conditions, check with your pediatrician about the safest sleeping position. Skin-to-skin contact with your newborn can also reduce the risk of SIDS. Skin-to-skin should be done as soon after birth as possible, at least for the first hour. After that, skin-to-skin is wonderful when you are awake but if you need to put the baby to sleep, put her in her bassinette on her back.

Don't let your baby sleep in a stroller, swing, or car seat. The safest place for him to sleep is in his crib or bassinette. Make sure your baby's crib or bassinette mattress is flat and firm. Cover the mattress with a tight-fitting sheet. Do not put blankets or pillows between the mattress and fitted sheet. Keep soft toys like stuffed animals, and soft bedding such as pillows, comforters and bumper pads out of the crib or bassinet. These things could suffocate your baby or increase the risk of strangulation and entrapment.

Never place your baby to sleep on a couch, sofa or armchair. This is a very dangerous place for your baby to sleep. It raises the risk of both SIDS and a falling injury. Share your room with your baby, but not the same bed. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends doing this for at least six months, but preferably until your baby is a year old. Room-sharing drops the risk of SIDS by as much 50%. Room sharing makes it easier for you to feed, comfort and keep an eye on your little one.

But remember sleeping in the same bed with your baby is dangerous. You can roll onto your baby during sleep or your baby can get tangled in the sheets or blankets. Only bring your baby into your bed to feed or comfort him. Make sure to remove pillows, blankets, or other soft bedding, in you case you fall asleep while feeding. If you do fall asleep, move your baby back into his own bed as soon as you wake up. Don't let your baby get too hot.

*“It's also important to keep the room relatively cool, even a ceiling fan might be useful to keep the air moving through the room.”*

If you are concerned your baby is cold, use a sleep sack. These are made to cover the body and not the head.

Consider giving your baby a pacifier at nap time and bedtime. If you are breastfeeding, wait until breastfeeding is going smoothly before giving your baby a pacifier. This usually takes about 3 to 4 weeks. If you are not breastfeeding, you can start a pacifier as soon as you want. It's okay if your baby doesn't want to use one, some babies don't like pacifiers. Don't use pacifiers attached to clothing, stuffed toys, or blankets, these items could suffocate or choke your baby.

Schedule and keep your well-baby visits. Your baby will receive important immunizations. Research suggests that immunizations may protect against SIDS. Be careful when considering products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS. There is no evidence that wedges, sleep positioners, and special mattresses work.

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If you smoke, try to quit. Keep your baby away from smokers and places where people smoke. Setting up a safe sleep environment is the best way to keep your baby safe and healthy and reduce the risk of SIDS. For more information on SIDS and how to reduce your baby's risk, talk to your pediatrician.