



BETTERSAFE

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

SAFE SLEEPING FOR BABIES

What You Can Do to Prevent SIDS

When infants die suddenly, unexpectedly, and without clear medical reason in their sleep, it's called sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Health care providers and researchers don't know the exact causes of SIDS. However, research shows parents and caregivers can take several steps to help reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths.

RISK FACTORS

All babies are at risk, especially those under 1 year of age. Babies are most vulnerable to SIDS up to 4 months old. One of the critical pieces to SIDS risk reduction is how the baby sleeps. Babies who are sleeping should be on their back. Limit a baby's belly time to when they're awake. A baby shouldn't sleep on their belly or side.

Why does sleep position matter? Sleeping on the belly lowers an infant's blood pressure and reduces their ability to get oxygen to the brain. Between 2 and 4 months old, especially, the reflex to breathe to get more oxygen is repressed when an infant sleeps on their belly.

Researchers also suspect that a brain condition may be a cause of SIDS. They have been studying the part of the brain that controls breathing and heart rate during sleep. They think these babies may not have the reflex to awaken when breathing becomes impaired.

What causes SIDS may not be known, but several things raise the risk. In addition to sleep position, research



shows that soft bedding above or below your infant is a danger.

There is no need to have a blanket. Instead, dress your baby in sleep clothing, such as a onesie, that's designed to keep them warm. This keeps them safer.

Make sure they're dressed appropriately for the environment, but don't over bundle. Check for signs that they're too hot, like sweating or if their chest is hot to the touch. It's also important to prevent your baby's nose and mouth from becoming covered. The area around them should not have any clutter—no toys, no bumpers.

Experts also advise that you keep your baby in the same room, but not in your bed with you. When you're done feeding, place your baby in their safe area, such as a cradle next to your bed.

The safe sleep environment is the biggest factor that's going to reduce or eliminate the SIDS risk for a baby that's less than a year old.

HELP PROTECT YOUR BABY FROM SIDS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these are the key steps to helping prevent SIDS

- » Place your baby on his or her back for all sleep times—naps and at night.
- » Use a firm, flat sleep surface, such as a firm mattress covered by a fitted sheet.
- » Keep your baby's sleep area (for example, a crib or bassinet) in the same room where you sleep until your baby is at least 6 months old, or ideally, until your baby is one year old.
- » Keep soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads, and soft toys out of your baby's sleep area.
- » Do not cover your baby's head or allow your baby to get too hot. Signs your baby may be getting too hot include sweating or his or her chest feels hot.



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.