

New Recommendations to Help Babies Sleep Safer

A mother goes to check on her baby and finds that he is not breathing. The tragedy is unimaginable. The baby has died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is the unexplained sudden death of an infant under one year of age. Although, in the past decade there has been a major decrease in the number of SIDS deaths, SIDS is still the cause of a great number of infant deaths. In October, the American Academy of Pediatrics revised their recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS. The Academy now recommends that babies sleep **only on their backs**, that babies older than 1 month be encouraged to use a pacifier and that parents bring their baby's crib into their bedroom. The following recommendations should be followed by **every** caregiver of infants.

The new recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS include:

- ❖ Back to sleep: Put your baby on his/her back for every sleep including naps. Do not place your baby on her side or tummy for sleep
- ❖ Use a crib that meets CPSC standards. A safe crib has a firm, tight fitting mattress covered by a tight fitting bottom sheet. Never use an adult sheet on a crib mattress and make sure there is no more than 2 3/8" between the slats
- ❖ Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib. Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys and other soft objects should be kept out of an infant's sleeping environment
- ❖ Create a smoke-free zone around your baby. Don't smoke during pregnancy
- ❖ Place the baby's crib near your bed to allow for more convenient feeding and contact. Return your baby to the crib after feeding. Don't bring the baby in your bed to sleep; there is evidence that bed sharing can increase the risk of SIDS and suffocation
- ❖ Consider offering your baby a pacifier. Recent studies found that pacifier use lowers the risk of SIDS by two thirds. Doctors say pacifiers work because they prevent babies from falling into a dangerously deep sleep
- ❖ Avoid overheating. Don't dress babies too warmly for sleep
- ❖ Consider using a sleeper instead of a blanket. If using a blanket, place your baby with her feet at the foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the crib mattress, reaching only as far up as the baby's chest. Make sure your baby's head remains uncovered during sleep
- ❖ Do not use home monitors. They don't reduce the risk of SIDS
- ❖ DO NOT use any commercial device advertised to reduce the risk of SIDS. According the American Academy of Pediatrics they have not been sufficiently tested to show that they are safe
- ❖ Never put your baby to sleep with other children who can accidentally roll over and suffocate the baby
- ❖ When traveling or visiting, check the safety of any crib, especially motel and hotel cribs
- ❖ Avoid development of a flat head by placing your baby on her tummy when awake and watched by adults. This helps develop strong muscles. Avoid having your baby spend a lot of in time car seats, bouncers and swings
- ❖ Make sure **everyone** who cares for your child is aware of these recommendations.

For more information contact the Parents as Teachers program, 623-2144 or 1-800-870-7746 or email: parentconnect @mpf.org

The information in this article was adapted from the document Safe Sleep for Your Baby Around the Clock: Birth to 12 Months, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration, Maternal Child Health Bureau and from the American Academy of Pediatrics' article, AAP Revises Recommendations on Reducing the Risk of SIDS