

# Safe Sleep and Your Baby: How Parents Can Reduce the Risk of SIDS and Suffocation

About 3,500 babies die each year in the United States during sleep because of unsafe sleep environments. Some of these deaths are caused by entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation. Some infants die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). However, there are ways for parents to keep their sleeping baby safe.

Note: These recommendations are for healthy babies up to 1 year of age. A very small number of babies with certain medical conditions may need to be placed to sleep on their stomach. Your baby's doctor can tell you what is best for your baby.

## What you can do

- **Place your baby to sleep on his back for every sleep.**
  - Babies up to 1 year of age should always be placed on their back to sleep during naps and at night. However, if your baby has rolled from his back to his side or stomach on his own, he can be left in that position if he is already able to roll from tummy to back and back to tummy.
  - If your baby falls asleep in a car safety seat, stroller, swing, infant carrier, or infant sling, he should be moved to a firm sleep surface as soon as possible.
  - Swaddling (wrapping a light blanket snugly around a baby) may help calm a crying baby. If you swaddle your baby, be sure to place him on his back to sleep. Stop swaddling your baby when he starts to roll.
- **Place your baby to sleep on a firm sleep surface.**
  - The crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard should meet current safety standards. Check to make sure the product has not been recalled.
  - Cover the mattress with a tight-fitting sheet.
  - Do not put blankets or pillows between the mattress and fitted sheet.
  - Never put your baby on a sofa, a cushioned chair, a water bed, a cushion, or a sheepskin.
- **Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any objects that could increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation out of the crib.**
  - Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, bumper pads, and stuffed toys can cause your baby to suffocate.



- **Place your baby to sleep in the same room where you sleep but not the same bed.** Do this at least 6 months but preferably up to 1 year of age. Room sharing decreases risk of SIDS as much as 50%.
  - Keep the crib or bassinet within an arm's reach of your bed.
  - Babies who sleep in the same bed as their parents are at risk of SIDS, suffocation, or strangulation.
- **Breastfeed as much and for as long as you can.** This helps reduce the risk of SIDS.
  - The AAP recommends breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for your baby for about 6 months. When you add solid foods to your baby's diet, continue breastfeeding until at least 12 months. You can continue breastfeeding after 12 months if you and your baby desire.
- **Schedule and go to all well-child visits.** Your baby will receive important immunizations.
  - Recent evidence suggests that immunizations may have a protective effect against SIDS.
- **Keep your baby away from smokers and places where people smoke.**
  - If you smoke, try to quit. However, until you can quit, keep your car and home smoke-free. Don't smoke inside your home or car, and don't smoke anywhere near your baby, even if you are outside.
- **Do not let your baby get too hot.** This helps reduce the risk of SIDS.
  - Keep the room where your baby sleeps at a comfortable temperature.
  - In general, dress your baby in no more than one extra layer than you would wear.
  - If you are worried that your baby is cold, use a wearable blanket, such as a sleeping sack, or warm sleeper that is the right size for your baby.
- **Offer a pacifier at nap time and bedtime.** This helps reduce the risk of SIDS.
  - If you are breastfeeding, wait until breastfeeding is going well before offering a pacifier. This usually takes 3 to 4 weeks.
  - If the pacifier falls out after your baby falls asleep, you don't have to put it back in.
  - Do not use pacifiers that attach to infant clothing or objects.

This handout was created using information provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).  
<https://patiented.solutions.aap.org/handout.aspx?gbosid=156543>

