



Safe Sleeping Practices and SIDS

Information Sheet for Parents

Some sleeping arrangements can be dangerous and increase the risk of sudden, unexpected death for babies. Although the causes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS or Cot Death) have not yet been found, research has identified some practical ways to reduce the risks of SIDS:

- **ALWAYS sleep baby on his or her back, from birth**
- Make sure your baby's head and face is uncovered
- Keep your baby in a smoke free environment, during pregnancy and afterwards
- Breastfeed your baby, if possible
- Ensure your baby has his or her own safe sleeping surface, and especially
- **NEVER sleep your baby with anyone who has been drinking alcohol or taking drugs, including sleeping tablets**
- A safe cot, safe mattress, safe bedding and safe sleeping environment should be provided for the baby day and night.
- Ideally, sleep baby in their own safe sleep environment next to the parent's bed for the first 6 to 12 months of life (i.e. in a cot, bassinet or other safe sleep surface)



Safety tips for cot sleeping

- Items such as soft toys, cot bumpers, sleep positioners or sheepskins can create a suffocation risk so should never be put in the cot.
- The cot mattress should be firm, well fitting and flat.
- The cot should be made up so your baby's feet are near the bottom of the cot and the covers only come up to your baby's shoulders.
- Don't let your baby get too hot
- Use light bedclothes. No doonas, pillows or cradle bumpers
- Tuck bedclothes in securely

Unsafe sleeping environments for babies increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS or cot death) and fatal sleeping accidents.

Parents need to be aware of some of the particular risks. For instance:

- It can be dangerous to sleep with your baby in the same bed at any time because baby can get caught under bedding or pillows.
- It is **especially** dangerous to sleep with baby in your bed when either you or your partner are affected by alcohol, drugs or sleeping tablets, or if you are very tired and cannot respond to your baby.
- Sleeping on a couch or sofa with a baby is **extremely dangerous**.
- Leaving baby alone on an adult bed or a couch is dangerous because they can fall onto the ground. Allowing a baby to sleep on an adult bed or couch is also dangerous due to them often being too soft and therefore increasing the risk of smothering.
- The risk of SIDS also increases if a parent who is a smoker sleeps with a baby if the baby is
 - under 11 weeks of age,
 - was born premature, or
 - was considered to be small when born.



Parents may choose to share a bed while breastfeeding, but to sleep safely a baby needs his or her own separate sleeping surface. Preferably this should be a bassinet or cot that is within reach of the adult bed, or is at least in hearing range, so the parent is able to soothe and comfort the baby.

At all times, it is important to ensure that your baby is safe.

Remember that if your baby is unwell or having breathing difficulties, contact your Doctor or hospital straight away.

If you have any questions about breast feeding, safe sleeping, SIDS, or about reducing the risks of SIDS, talk to your local Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

More information and brochures are available from SIDS and Kids Australia -

<http://www.sidsandkids.org/safe-sleeping>

If you would like to speak to the local Parent Line, please call the following number: 1300 808 178 (local call cost but mobile charges apply).

