

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Guidelines

The recommendations outlined here were developed to reduce the risk of SIDS:

Back to sleep: Infants should be placed for sleep in a supine position (wholly on the back) for every sleep. Side sleeping is not as safe as supine sleeping and is not advised.

Use a firm sleep surface: Soft materials or objects such as pillows, quilts, comforters, or sheepskins should not be placed under a sleeping infant. A firm crib mattress, covered by a sheet, is the recommended sleeping surface.

Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib: Soft objects such as pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft objects should be kept out of an infant's sleeping environment. If bumper pads are used in cribs, they should be thin, firm, well secured and not "pillow-like". In addition, loose bedding such as blankets and sheets may be hazardous. If blankets are to be used, they should be tucked in around the crib mattress so that the infant's face is less likely to become covered by bedding, with the blankets tucked in around the crib mattress and reaching only to the level of the infant's chest. Another strategy is to use sleep clothing with no other covering over the infant or infant sleep sacks that are designed to keep the infant warm without the possible hazard of head covering.

Do not smoke: Smoke in the infant's environment is a risk factor. Do not expose your infant to second-hand smoke.

A separate but proximate sleeping environment is recommended: Infants should sleep in the same room as the parent. A crib, bassinet, or cradle that conforms to the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission is recommended. "Cosleepers" (infant beds that attach to the mother's bed) provide easy access to the infant but safety standards for these devices have not yet been established. Evidence is growing that bed sharing is more hazardous than the infant sleeping on a separate sleep surface and, therefore, we recommend that infants not bed share during sleep. It is also very dangerous to put an infant to sleep on a couch or armchair. Babies should share a bedroom with parents, but not the same sleeping surface, preferably until the baby turns 1 but at least for the first 6 months.

Consider offering a pacifier at naptime and bedtime: Although the mechanism is not known, pacifier use during sleep is shown to reduce the risk of SIDS.

The following are some guidelines for pacifier use throughout the first year:

- Pacifier should be used when placing the infant down for sleep and not be reinserted once the infant falls asleep. If the infant refuses the pacifier, he or she should not be forced to take it.
- Pacifiers should not be coated in any sweet solution.
- Pacifiers should be cleaned often and replaced regularly.
- For breastfed infants, delay pacifier introduction until one month of age to ensure that breastfeeding is firmly established.

Avoid overheating: The infant should be lightly clothed for sleep, and the bedroom temperature should be kept comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.

Avoid commercial devices marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS:

None have been tested sufficiently to show efficacy or safety to reduce the risk of SIDS. There is also no evidence that use of such home monitors decreases the incidence of SIDS.

Avoid development of positional plagiocephaly (flattening of head):

Encourage “tummy time” when the infant is awake and observed. This will also enhance motor development. Avoid having the infant spend excessive time in car-seat carriers and “bouncers”. Alter the supine head position during sleep. Place the infant to sleep with the head to one side for a week and then change to the other side for a week. Periodically change the orientation of the infant to outside activity.