

The Importance of Safe Sleep: What Every Parent Needs to Know

Preparing for the birth of a child is both exciting and nerve-racking. There are many different choices for baby items, and with all of the preparation for the new baby's arrival, mothers may be concerned about making the right purchase. This is especially true for purchasing a safe space for baby to sleep. The importance of having a safe sleep space for baby cannot be understated.

Safe sleep can help reduce a baby's risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related deaths, such as Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in Bed (ASSB), according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). SIDS is defined as an unexplained death of a baby, which often happens when a baby is sleeping and is sometimes referred to as "crib death," as deaths for babies are a concern while they're sleeping in the crib. The cause for SIDS is unknown and research suggests there may be a problem in the baby's brain that controls breathing and waking up from sleep.

According to the NICHD, more than 85% of all deaths for babies from birth to 4 to 6 months of age are from ASSB. This occurs when there is something limiting the baby's breathing, for example, when a baby is lying in their bed with a soft blanket, pillows, a favorite stuffed animal or the bedding against their face. Another example is when the baby becomes trapped between two objects in the bed like a toy, mattress, or a wall. At times parents may be tired and may find it easy to attend to the baby's needs during the night by allowing the baby to sleep with them in their bed. While this may seem the easy thing to do, it is not safe for your baby. Having their own space, their own bed, is the safer way to go. Having a safe space for your baby to sleep is one of the most important safety measures parents can take for their baby.



Here are a few safe sleep tips for parents:

- Share a room with the baby, not in the bed, but close to the bed
- Make sure the baby's surface is firm and sheets are smooth
- Place the baby on their back to sleep and for naps
- Make sure the baby's sleep area is clutter-free
- Give your baby lots of "tummy time" when they are awake
- Refrain from giving your baby a bottle lying down
- Offer a pacifier for sleep
- Provide a smoke- and vape-free home for baby
- Avoid overheating by dressing baby in light sleep clothing

Ensuring your baby is sleeping in the correct position (on their back) every time they are put down to sleep is crucial during the first year of their life. Understanding the key components of a safe sleep space and creating a safe sleep environment will reduce the risk of SIDS and ASSB and are imperative to ensure babies have a chance to thrive. For more information on the "Safe to Sleep" campaign visit <https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov> or https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/STS_2022_Brochure_English.pdf.

Sleep Tight, Sleep Safe

Dr. Rachel Cash,
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