

SAFE SLEEP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Where should I put my baby's crib?

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their own safe crib, in the parent's room for the first six months. This is true for day-time sleeps too. Babies should never sleep next to a radiator, heater or in direct sunlight. Keep an eye on the temperature by buying a simple room thermometer. Make sure your baby cannot reach cords on curtains, window blinds or lights.

What if I don't have room for a crib?

A cradle is a safe alternative for sleep. A cradle can be used up to six months of age or until the baby can push up on their hands and knees. Another alternative is to sleep the baby on a blanket on the floor away from clutter, pets, vents, electrical outlets, cords etc.

What kind of mattress should I use?

It is important that your baby's mattress fits the crib snugly. You should not be able to fit more than two fingers between the mattress and the crib. Ideally you should buy a new mattress for each new baby. If you are not able to do this, it is important to make sure the mattress is in good condition; there are no tears, cracks, holes or mould. All mattresses should be firm, not soft. Press your hand into the mattress, if it depresses, the mattress is too soft. Never sleep your baby on a pillow, cushion, bean bag, air mattress or waterbed.

Where should my baby sleep if we are away from home?

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a crib. When away from home or travelling this might not be possible. A portable hard-sided crib is a safe alternative. Portable soft-sided cribs, car seats, adult beds, couches, air mattress, etc. should never be used for sleep. A safe alternative is to sleep the baby on a blanket on the floor away from clutter, pets, vents, electrical outlets, cords etc.

Can I use a duvet, quilt or pillow for my baby?

No, you should not use a duvet, quilt or pillow. Don't use electric blankets or hot water bottles. Only a light blanket tucked in on all sides is needed or CFSID recommends a wearable blanket or sleep sack such as the Halo Sleep Sack.

Can my baby use a sleep sack or wearable blanket?

Yes, sleep sacks and wearable blankets designed for safe sleep can replace the need for a blanket. It is important that the sleep sack has the right size opening at the neck and arms so your baby won't slip down inside the bag and the size fits the baby correctly. It should not have a hood. Never use with a duvet. To make sure your baby doesn't become too hot, choose a lightweight bag. CFSID recommends the Halo Sleep Sack.

Can my baby share my bed?

Sharing a bed with your baby is not recommended. There are dangers in bed-sharing. The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their own crib in your bedroom for the first six months. There is a proven risk in bed sharing especially if you or your partner smoke (even if you never smoke in bed or at home), have been drinking alcohol, take drugs or medication that make you drowsy, or have had little sleep, or if your baby was born premature or was small at birth. Never sleep together with your baby on a sofa, armchair, futon, etc. The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their own crib.

My baby keeps rolling onto his front. What should I do?

Many babies start to roll over at about four or five months. Once your baby starts rolling and choosing his own sleep position, you don't need to keep turning him over onto his back. However, whatever your baby's age, CFSID recommends that you keep placing your baby on his back when you put him down at bedtime and naptime, even though he has learned to roll over. The most important thing is to ensure that when your baby rolls over, he is doing so in a safe sleep environment - free from soft bedding, pillows, stuffed toys and other objects.

Is it okay to swaddle my baby?

People swaddle in different ways, using different weight materials. If you swaddle your baby, you should only use thin materials and swaddle under the arms. Swaddle blankets are another alternative. It is important to look for ones designed for safe sleep.

Is it okay for my baby to sleep in a car seat? What about long trips?

Car seats are not designed for sleep. If your baby is being transported in a car, they should be carried in a properly designed and fitted car seat, facing backwards, and be observable by a competent adult. Be careful that your baby doesn't get too hot. Remove hats and outdoor coats when you get in the car. Use of window shades may be helpful in reducing heat in the car by blocking out some of the sun.

On long trips it is important to continuously check on the baby to ensure they are positioned correctly. Make sure the baby's head isn't flopped forward on its chest as this can cause airway obstruction and put strain on the spine. You should make frequent stops and remove the baby from the car seat so they aren't in the same position for more than 1 or 2 hours. This is a good time to feed them and change their diaper, and gives the driver a chance to reposition and stretch too. Premature babies who may slump need particular care when travelling in a car seat.

A recent study of car seats gave this advice: "We are still concerned about the vulnerability of infants in car seats ... We advise parents to use car seats that do not have a steeply angled back. Caregivers are also instructed that immature infants being discharged from the neonatal nursery should be watched carefully while in the car seat and transferred back to their crib as soon as possible after the car journey ends." [*Car seat test for preterm infants: comparison with polysomnography, Elder et al. Arch. Dis. Child. Fetal Neonatal Ed..2007; 92: F468-F472*]

Can I use a car seat cover?

CFSID does not recommend the use of car seat covers. These items compromise the safety of the car seat, restrict air flow and pose a risk for overheating.

Plastic Stroller Covers (Rain Covers)

Most plastic stroller covers have small holes for airflow. However, airflow is minimal and the plastic creates a heat trap, especially on hot humid days which could pose a risk of overheating.

How can I prevent my baby's head from getting covered?

Bedding poses a potential risk for covering the baby's face and head. When putting your baby to sleep, place him with his feet to the foot of the crib, with a light blanket firmly tucked in on all sides, and no higher than the shoulders, so he can't wriggle down. CFSID recommends the use of a sleep sack or wearable blanket instead of a sheet or a blanket to reduce the risk.

Do movement (breathing) monitors prevent SIDS?

There is no evidence that movement monitors (also known as apnea or breathing monitors) prevent SIDS. Babies can and do die while on a monitor. They are designed to sound an alarm if they can't detect a baby's breathing movement. They cannot detect a blocked airway until

breathing movements stop. While these products do not prevent SIDS, they may provide some level of comfort for the parents.

Is it safe for my baby to play on her tummy?

Babies should have plenty of opportunity to play on the tummy, to help develop tone in the neck and back muscles and avoid misshapen heads. Babies should always be supervised during tummy play. Tummy play should be introduced as soon as the cord falls off for a few minutes at least five times a day. Each week increase the length of play as your baby learns to tolerate the position. By three months of age, baby should be playing on his/her tummy for 15 minutes, five times a day.

Should I breastfeed my baby?

Yes. Breastfeeding has been found to reduce the risk of SIDS. Breastfeeding also increases resistance to infection and helps develop a healthy immune system.

Should I use a pacifier?

Research suggests that settling your baby to sleep with a pacifier – even for naps – can reduce the risk of SIDS. If breastfeeding, do not offer a pacifier until one month of age or until breastfeeding is well-established. Don't worry if the pacifier falls out while your baby is asleep, there is no need to replace it. If your baby refuses a pacifier, don't force it. Never coat the pacifier in anything sweet. If using a pacifier, be sure to offer it at every sleep.

Do vaccinations cause SIDS?

No, SIDS is not caused by immunization. Current clinical research has found no correlation between SIDS and vaccines.

What can I do to reduce the risk of SIDS?

Always place your baby on the back to sleep (never on the front or side) for all sleeps including nap and night time.

Stop smoking - smoking during and after pregnancy significantly increases the risk of SIDS. It is best to completely eliminate smoke from your baby's environment. Never hold a baby while smoking.

Do not let your baby get too hot, and keep your baby's head uncovered. CFSID recommends the use of a sleep sack or wearable blanket designed for safe sleep, such as the Halo Sleep Sack.

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their own safe crib in the parent's room for the first six months.

Never sleep with your baby on a sofa, armchair, adult bed, futon, etc. A baby should never share a sleep surface with anyone. It is especially dangerous for your baby to sleep in your bed if you (or your partner):

- are a smoker, even if you never smoke in bed or at home
- have been drinking alcohol
- take medication or drugs that make you drowsy
- feel very tired

or if your baby:

- was born before 37 weeks
- weighed less than 2.5kg or 5½ lbs at birth

Don't forget, accidents can happen: you might roll over in your sleep and suffocate your baby; or your baby could get caught between the wall and the bed, or could roll out of bed and be injured.

Use a pacifier - Settling your baby to sleep (day and night) with a pacifier can reduce the risk of SIDS, even if the pacifier falls out while your baby is asleep. Breastfeeding should be well established before introducing a pacifier.

Breastfeed your baby. Breastfeeding provides some protection against SIDS. Breastfeeding also promotes a healthy immune system and provides antibodies that protect against infection.

Create a safe sleep environment – start with a crib with a properly fitting mattress and a tight-fitting crib sheet. There should be no toys, bumper pads, positioners, soft items, pillows, duvets, quilts etc. in the crib.

Why should the baby be in my room for the first six months?

The practice is recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada (www.publichealth.gc.ca/safesleep) and by the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS).

The protective effect of room sharing can be partially explained by increased adult supervision and observation of the baby. Parents may become aware of dangerous situations (such as the baby rolling onto their tummy) or baby movement or distress. Studies of night time mother-baby interactions have shown that room-sharing mothers and babies had increased physical contact, more breastfeeding episodes and increased arousals compared to those sleeping in separate rooms.

Will my baby choke if sleeping on her back?

There is no increased risk of choking when sleeping a baby on their back. Babies have a tonic neck reflex that causes them to turn their head to the side when lying on their back. If they spit up, the fluid will run out the sides of the mouth.

What is a safe sleep environment?

A safe sleep environment starts with a crib with a properly fitting mattress and a tight-fitting cotton crib sheet. There should be no toys, bumper pads, positioners, soft items, pillows, duvets, quilts etc. in the crib.

Are slings and carriers safe?

Health Canada issued a warning about the use of slings and soft infant carriers due to potential risk of injury or even death. When using these items, make sure the baby's face is always visible. CFSID only recommends using a front-facing carrier. Never allow your baby to sleep in a sling or carrier.

Are all cribs safe?

Cribs purchased prior to September 1986 should not be used. Today, cribs and cradles for sale in Canada meet safety regulations set forth by the Consumer Product Safety division of Health Canada. All cribs must have a label identifying the date of manufacture. Items purchased in the U.S. may not meet Canadian standards.

How should twins sleep?

The safest way for any baby to sleep is in their own safe crib in the parent's room for the first six months. If you do not have room for two cribs, cradles are a safe alternative. If you must sleep twins together, sleep one with feet at the head of the crib and one with feet at the foot of the crib. Separate them when they are able to move freely.