



sids and kids[®]

safe sleeping



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SIDS and Kids safe sleeping

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Babies and young children spend a lot of their time sleeping. Some sleeping arrangements are not safe. They can increase the risk of SIDS or cause serious sleeping accidents.

Research has found some important ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and create a safe sleeping environment for babies and young children. This brochure provides you with information to help you create a safe sleeping environment for your child.

What is SIDS?

SIDS is short for 'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome' and used to be called 'cot death'. It means the sudden, unexpected death of a baby from no known cause. SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies between one month and one year of age. Most babies who die of SIDS are under six months. More babies die of SIDS in winter than in summer.

It is still not clear what causes SIDS. Some factors are thought to work together to reduce the risk of SIDS, but they may or may not help prevent any one SIDS death. Remember, 1999 out of 2000 babies will not die of SIDS.

Some new information



Since the Reducing the Risk of SIDS program was introduced in Australia in 1991, SIDS deaths have been significantly reduced.

How to reduce the risk of SIDS

Put baby on the back to sleep, from birth

Sleep baby with face uncovered

Cigarette smoke is bad for babies



SIDS and sleep baby safely



- Put baby's feet at the bottom of the cot
- Tuck in bedclothes securely so bedding is not loose
- Ensure quilts, doonas, duvets, pillows and cot bumpers are not in the cot

Put baby on the back to sleep, from birth

Sleeping on the back reduces the risk of SIDS. The chance of babies dying from SIDS is greater if they sleep on their tummies or sides. Put your baby on the back to sleep, from birth, unless your doctor or nurse tells you otherwise. Healthy babies placed to sleep on the back are less likely to choke on vomit than tummy sleeping infants.

If you are unsure about the best way to sleep your baby, speak with your doctor or nurse.

Tummy play is safe and good for babies when they are awake and an adult is present, but don't put baby on the tummy to sleep.

Baby-sitters and others who care for your baby may not know that tummy or side sleeping increases the risk of SIDS. Explain this to them before you leave your baby in their care.

Older babies can turn over and move around the cot. Put them on the back but let them find their own sleeping position. The risk of SIDS in babies over six months is extremely low.

Sleep baby with face uncovered

Be careful your baby's face and head stay uncovered during sleep as this decreases the risk of SIDS.

A good way to do this is to put baby's feet at the bottom of the cot so that baby can't slip down under the blankets. You might decide not to use blankets at all and instead, use a safe baby sleeping bag: one with fitted neck and arm holes.

When baby is put to sleep check that:

- Baby is tucked in securely or is in a safe sleeping bag.
- Cot bedding is not loose.
- There are no quilts, doonas, duvets, pillows or cot bumpers in the cot.

Taking baby into an adult bed may be unsafe if baby:

- Gets caught under adult bedding or pillows.
- Is trapped between the wall and the bed.
- Falls out of bed.
- Is rolled on by someone who sleeps very deeply or who is affected by drugs or alcohol.



Cigarette smoke is bad for babies



Cigarette smoke harms babies before birth and after. Parents who smoke during pregnancy and after the baby is born increase the risk of SIDS for their baby. In fact, if mother smokes, the risk of SIDS doubles, and if father smokes too, the risk doubles again.

There is an increased risk of SIDS if parents are smokers, even if they smoke outside, away from the baby. If mothers who are smokers bedshare with their babies the risk of SIDS is increased. The reasons for this are not clear. However, we do know that being a non-smoker or smoking less will reduce the risk for your baby.

Try not to let anyone smoke near your baby - not in the house, the car or anywhere else your baby spends time. If you want to quit smoking and you're not finding it easy, ask for help. Call the QuitLine on **131 848** or ask your doctor, midwife or child health nurse for information and advice.



How to sleep young children safely

- Safe cot.
- Safe mattress.
- Safe bedding.
- Safe sleeping place, night and day.

Safe Cot

Does the cot meet Australian Standards?

All new and secondhand cots sold in Australia must meet the Australian Standard for Cots (AS 2172) and will carry a label to say so.

Old or secondhand cots may be dangerous for the following reasons:

- Wobbly or broken parts that make the cot weak.
- Gaps a toddler or baby can get caught in.
- Knobs, corner posts or exposed bolts that can hook onto a toddler's or baby's clothing around the neck.
- Sides that are too low and can be climbed over by active little toddlers.
- Sharp catches or holes in the wood that can hurt curious little fingers.
- Paint that might contain poisonous lead.

Check that cots meet the Australian Standard before use.

Babies can become trapped in a tilted rocking - cot or cradle. If you have a cradle or cot that rocks and has a locking pin, make sure you secure the locking pin firmly in place whenever you leave your baby, and double check it to make sure the cradle cannot move when you are not there to supervise.



Note - Portable or 'porta' cots

Use the firm, clean, well-fitting mattress that is supplied with the portable cot. Don't add additional padding under the mattress as baby can get trapped face down in gaps created between the mattress and the cot wall. There is a separate Australian Standard that is used for all portable cots. The portable cot Australian Standard is AS 2195 and portable cots that meet the standard carry a label to say so.



Remember:

Always look for the Australian Standard for Cots before you buy a cot.

If you are planning to use a secondhand cot, check that it meets the standard. For a guide to cot and nursery furniture safety, visit the Consumer Affairs website at www.consumer.gov.au for the publication 'Keeping Baby Safe'.

Safe Mattress

Is the cot mattress the right size for the cot, and is it firm and clean?

A toddler or baby can get stuck in gaps between the mattress and the cot sides. This is especially dangerous if their face is trapped and covered, or their neck is restricted in any way. Make sure there is no more than a 25mm (1inch) gap between the mattress and the cot sides and ends. Remove plastic packaging from the mattress. Always make sure the waterproof mattress protector is strong and a tight fit. A pillow or cushion is not a safe mattress. They are soft and may cover baby's face.



Safe Bedding

Remove pillows, quilts, doonas, duvets and lambskins from the cot

Soft and puffy bedding in the cot is unnecessary and may cover your baby's face and make breathing difficult.

If you firmly wrap or swaddle your baby, it is safer not to cover baby's head.

A Safe Place to Sleep

During night & day, look out for dangers

The following are things to look out for and avoid where your toddler or baby sleeps - both during the night and for any daytime naps.

Remember to look for these things in your own home and anywhere your child is cared for - including day care, childcare centres and the homes of family and friends.

1. An unsupervised adult bed may be unsafe for babies or toddlers if they:

- Get caught under adult bedding or pillows.
- Get trapped between the wall and the bed.
- Fall out of bed.
- Are rolled on by someone who sleeps very deeply or who is affected by drugs or alcohol.

The risk of accident is increased if you leave your baby or toddler alone on an adult bed or bunk bed.

2. Soft sleeping places where a toddler's or baby's face may get covered:

- If you fall asleep with the baby while on a couch or sofa, there is a very high risk of a sleeping accident.
- Babies don't need pillows. Pillows, cushions or tri-pillows are too soft and can cover baby's face.
- Don't put your baby or toddler on a waterbed or beanbag. They are not safe for babies or toddlers.

3. Dangling cords or string

Keep the cot away from any cords hanging from blinds, curtains or electrical appliances because they could get caught around baby's neck. Keep mobiles out of the reach of curious little hands and mouths.



4. Heaters and electrical appliances

Keep heaters or any electrical appliances well away from the cot to avoid the risk of overheating, burns and electrocution.

Don't use electric blankets, hot water bottles or wheat bags for babies or young children.

Remember that your toddler or baby cannot escape from a bed or cot to cool down and does not know how to remove bedclothes. A baby that becomes too hot is at an increased risk of SIDS.

5. Prams, strollers and bouncers where restraints are not done up

Always do up the restraints when baby is in a pram, stroller, bouncer or any other baby/toddler equipment. It can be dangerous if baby becomes tangled in loose restraints. Also, restraints will not be the safety measure they should be if they are not done up the way they are supposed to be. Make sure the footrest on the stroller is strong and secure. A weak footrest may give way and cause baby to become trapped.

Any more questions?

If you have any questions at all, about how to reduce the risk of SIDS and sleep your baby safely, there are a number of ways you can get answers to your questions.

- Talk to your doctor or child health nurse.
- Call SIDS and Kids in your state or territory on **1300 308 307**.

There is a SIDS and Kids safe sleeping 'Frequently Asked Questions' sheet, which answers many additional questions. Ask for it to be sent to you.

- Visit the SIDS and Kids website **www.sidsandkids.org**

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