



Bellingham Technical College ● Baby 'n Me (1-7 Months) Reduce the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

What is SIDS?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death

of an infant under one year of age. SIDS, sometimes known as crib death, is the major cause of death in babies from one month to one year of age. SIDS strikes nearly 5,000 babies in the United States every year. Most SIDS deaths occur when a baby is between 1 and 4 months old. More boys than girls are victims, and most deaths occur during the fall, winter and early spring months. The death is sudden and unpredictable; in most cases, the baby seems healthy. Death occurs quickly, usually during a sleep time. After 30 years of research, scientists still cannot find one definite cause or causes for SIDS. There is no way to predict or prevent SIDS. Although doctors and nurses don't know what causes SIDS, they have found some things you can do to make your baby safer.

Healthy Babies Should Sleep on Their Back

One of the most important things you can do to help reduce the risk of SIDS is to put your healthy baby on his or her back to sleep. Do this when your baby is being put down for a nap or to bed for the night. This is new. Your mother was told and, if you have other children, you may have been told that babies should sleep on their tummy. Now, doctors and nurses believe that most infants sleep on their back.

Check With Your Doctor or Nurse

Most babies should sleep on their back. But a few babies have health conditions that might require them to sleep on their tummy. If your baby was born with a birth defect, often spits up after eating, or has a breathing, lung or heart problem, be sure to talk to a doctor or nurse about which sleep position to use. Some mothers worry that babies sleeping on their back may choke on spit-up or vomit during sleep. There is no evidence that sleeping on the back causes choking. Millions of babies around the world now sleep on their back and doctors have not found an increase in choking or other problems. Some babies at first don't like sleeping on their back, but most get used to it and this is the best sleep position for your baby. Although back sleeping is the best sleep position, your baby can be placed on his or her side. Side position does not provide as much protection against SIDS as back sleeping, but it is much better than placing your baby on his or her tummy. Your baby can be placed on his or her stomach when awake. Some "tummy time" during awake hours is good for your baby. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have questions about your baby's sleep position.

Other Things You Can Do

Bedding. Make sure that your baby sleeps on a firm mattress or other firm surface. Don't use fluffy blankets or comforters under the baby. Don't let the baby sleep on a waterbed, sheepskin, a pillow, or other soft materials. When your baby is very young, don't place soft stuffed toys or pillows in the crib with him or her. Some babies have smothered with these soft materials in the crib.

Temperature. Babies should be kept warm, but they should not be allowed to get too warm. Keep the temperature in your baby's room so that it feels comfortable to you.

Smoke-free. Create a smoke-free zone around your baby. No one should smoke around your baby. Babies and young children exposed to smoke have more colds and other diseases, as well as an increased risk of SIDS. Doctor or clinic visits. If your baby seems sick, call your doctor or clinic right away. Make sure your baby receives his or her shots on schedule.

Prenatal care. Early and regular prenatal care can also help reduce the risk of SIDS. The risk of SIDS is higher for babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy. For your baby's well being, you should not use alcohol or drugs during pregnancy unless prescribed by a doctor.

Breastfeeding. If possible, you should consider breastfeeding your baby. Breast milk helps to keep your baby healthy.

Enjoy your baby! Remember, most babies are born healthy and most stay that way. Don't let the fear of SIDS spoil your joy and enjoyment of having a new baby.

Best Sleep Position

Make sure your baby goes to sleep on his or her back. This provides the best protection against SIDS.

Alternative Sleep Position

If you choose to use the side sleep position, make sure your baby's lower arm is forward to stop him or her from rolling over onto the stomach. If you have any questions about your baby's sleep position or health, first talk to your doctor or nurse.

For More Information

For more information about the Back to Sleep campaign, call free of charge, 1-800-505-2742. Or you can write to: Back to Sleep, 31 Center Drive, Rm. 2A32, Bethesda, MD 20892-2425.