

# A CHILD CARE PROVIDER'S GUIDE TO SAFE SLEEP

Helping you to reduce the risk of SIDS

## DID YOU KNOW?

- About 20% of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) deaths occur while an infant is being cared for by someone other than a parent. Many of these deaths occur when infants who are used to sleeping on their backs at home are then put to sleep on their tummies by another caregiver. We sometimes call this “unaccustomed tummy sleeping.”
- Unaccustomed tummy sleeping increases the risk of SIDS. Babies who are used to sleeping on their backs and are put to sleep on their tummies are 6-9 times more likely to die from SIDS.

## WHO IS AT RISK FOR SIDS?

- SIDS is the cause of death for nearly 2,500 babies in the United States (in 2000).
- It is the leading cause of death between 1 month and 12 months of age.
- It is most common among infants that are 2-4 months old.
- It is more common during the winter months.
- It is more common in male babies.

But, because we don't know what causes SIDS, safe sleep practices should be used to reduce the risk of SIDS in every infant under the age of 1 year.

## KNOW THE TRUTH... SIDS IS NOT CAUSED BY:

- Immunizations
- Vomiting or choking

## WHAT CAN CHILD CARE PROVIDERS DO?

- Create and use a safe sleep policy – *Reducing the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Applicable Standards from Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out of Home Child Care Programs* outlines what should be included in the safe sleep policy. Visit <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/SPINOFF/SIDS/SIDS.htm> to download a free copy.
- Practice SIDS reduction in your program by using the *Caring for Our Children* standards.
- Talk with a child care health consultant about health and safety in child care.
- Talk with families about sleep positioning.
- Don't smoke around babies, especially in the room where they sleep.
- Be able to respond to an infant medical emergency.
- Be aware of bereavement/grief resources.

## A SAFE SLEEP POLICY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Healthy babies should always sleep on their backs. Side sleeping is not as safe as back sleeping and is not advised.
- Get a physician's note for non-back sleepers that explains why the baby should not use a back-sleeping position.
- Use safety-approved cribs and firm mattresses (cradles and bassinets may provide safe sleeping enclosures, but safety standards have not been established for these items).

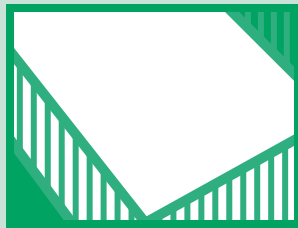
- Keep cribs free of toys, stuffed animals, and extra bedding.
- Place the child's feet to the foot of the crib and tuck in a light blanket along the sides and foot of the mattress. The blanket should not come up higher than the infant's chest. Another option is to use sleep clothing and nothing else in the infant's crib.
- Sleep only 1 baby per crib.
- Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Visually check on sleeping babies often.
- No smoking around babies. Make sure babies are being watched when you go outside to smoke. Child care providers who smoke should do so outside, with an overcoat on. The overcoat will be removed when they return to work. Never allow smoking in a room where babies sleep, as exposure to smoke is linked to an increased risk of SIDS.
- Have supervised “tummy time” for awake babies. This will help babies strengthen their muscles and develop normally.
- Teach staff about safe sleep policies and practices and be sure to review these practices often.

When a new baby is coming into the program, be sure to talk to the parents about your safe sleep policy and how their baby sleeps. If the baby is to sleep in a way other than on her back, the child's parents or guardians need a note from the child's physician that explains how she should sleep and the medical reason for this position. You should only accept a medical reason for a sleep position other than on the back. This note should be kept on file and all staff, including substitutes and volunteers, should be informed of this special situation. It is also a good idea to put a sign on the baby's crib.

**If you are not sure of how to create a safe sleep policy, try working with a child care health consultant to create a policy that fits your child care center or home.**



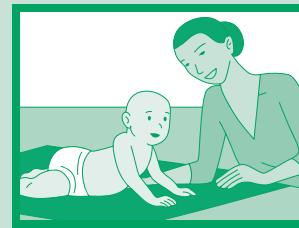
Face up to wake up – healthy babies sleep safest on their backs.



Do not place pillows, quilts, pillow-like bumpers, toys, or anything in the crib.



If a light blanket is needed, tuck all sides along bottom half of crib, below baby's arms.



Supervised tummy time during play is important to baby's healthy development.

## HOW CAN I REDUCE THE RISK OF INFANTS IN MY CARE?

Follow these guidelines to help protect the infants in your care:

### TUMMY TO PLAY AND BACK TO SLEEP

- Tummy time is playtime when infants are awake and placed on their tummies while someone is watching them. Have as much tummy time as possible to allow infants to develop normally. Limit time spent in freestanding swings, bouncy chairs, and car seats. These items all put added pressure on the back of the baby's head.
- Place healthy babies to sleep on their backs to reduce the risk of SIDS. Side sleeping is not as safe as back sleeping and is not advised. Babies sleep comfortably on their backs, and no special equipment or extra money is needed.

### SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES

- Always put babies to sleep on their backs during naps and at nighttime.
- Avoid letting the baby get too hot. The infant could be too hot if you notice sweating, damp hair, flushed cheeks, heat rash, and/or rapid breathing. Dress the baby lightly for sleep. Set the room temperature in a range that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Don't cover the heads of babies with a blanket or over bundle them in clothing and blankets.

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## SAFE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

- Place each baby in a safety-approved crib with a firm mattress and a well-fitting sheet.
- Put babies to sleep only in a safety-approved crib. Don't put babies to sleep on chairs, sofas, waterbeds, or cushions. Standard adult beds are NOT safe places for babies to sleep in child care settings.
- Toys and other soft bedding, including fluffy blankets, comforters, pillows, stuffed animals, and wedges should not be placed in the crib with the baby. These items can impair the infant's ability to breathe if they cover his face. If bumper pads are used in cribs, they should be thin, firm, well-secured, and not "pillow-like".
- The crib should be placed in an area that is always smoke-free.
- Support parents who want to breastfeed or feed their children breast milk.

## AM I A CHILD CARE PROVIDER?

Some child care providers work in child centers or family child care homes, but other kinds of child care providers could be grandparents, babysitters, family friends, or anyone who cares for a baby. These guidelines apply to any kind of child care provider. If you ever care for a child who is less than 12 months of age, you should be aware of and follow these safe sleep practices.

If you have questions about safe sleep practices and back to sleep please contact the Healthy Child Care America program at the American Academy of Pediatrics at [hcca@aap.org](mailto:hcca@aap.org) or 847/434-4915. Remember, if you have a question about the health and safety of an infant in your care, talk to the parents, and with their permission, talk to the baby's doctor.

## RESOURCES:

American Academy of Pediatrics

[www.aappolicy.org](http://www.aappolicy.org)

*Changing Concepts of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome: Implications for Infant Sleeping Environment and Sleep Position -*  
<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;105/3/650>

Healthy Child Care America

[www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org)

*Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care*, Second Edition Visit the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care Web site at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/> to download a free copy. Hard copies are available from the American Academy of Pediatrics Bookstore at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

National Institute for Child and Human Development Back to Sleep Campaign  
Order free educational materials from the Back to Sleep Campaign at  
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/sids.cfm>

First Candle/SIDS Alliance  
<http://www.sidsalliance.org/>

Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs  
<http://www.asip1.org/>

CJ Foundation for SIDS  
<http://www.cjsids.com/>

American Indian and Alaska Native SIDS Risk Reduction Resource  
[http://www.cjsids.com/resource\\_kit/CJ\\_resource.htm](http://www.cjsids.com/resource_kit/CJ_resource.htm)

National SIDS and Infant Death Program Support Center  
<http://sids-id-psc.org/>

National SIDS and Infant Death Resource Center  
<http://www.sidscenter.org/>

American Academy  
of Pediatrics



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