

Minimising the Risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)



What causes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)?

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), also known as cot death or crib death, is the sudden unexplained death of a child less than one year of age. Diagnosis requires that the death remains unexplained even after a thorough autopsy and detailed death scene investigation. SIDS usually occurs during sleep.

Although no research has proven conclusive, many studies indicate that SIDS occurs due to instabilities and immaturities in a baby's respiratory and cardiovascular systems (breathing problems and irregular heart rate). All parents need to be aware of what SIDS is and how to do everything possible to prevent it from happening to their family

Minimising the Risk of SIDS

There is a range of things we can do to minimise the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

- Babies should be laid to sleep on their backs, rather than on their sides or front.
- Situate your baby so that their feet touch the bottom of the cot, to prevent them from slipping down and beneath the covers.
- Control your baby's temperature by not over-dressing her, or over-heating the room. Keep the room well-ventilated.

Safe sleeping position for babies



Cot-to-bed safety

An increasing number of babies and toddlers are sustaining injuries from falling out of cots and beds. This is due to either not recognising the appropriate time to move a baby or young child out of a cot, or a baby or young child being placed too early in an adult bed.

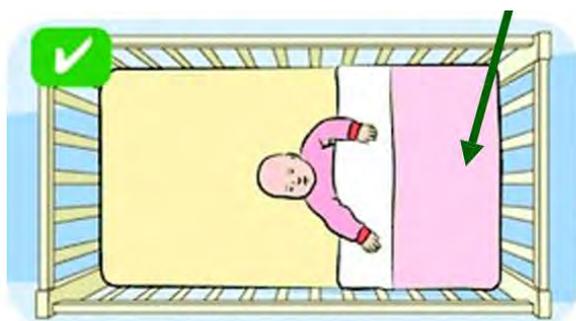
Safe sleeping position for babies

- It is advisable that babies never sleep with a pillow or cot-bumpers.
- If you have been smoking or drinking alcohol, you should avoid sleeping with your baby.
- Avoid covering a baby's head while they are sleeping.
- Never co-sleep with a baby if your sense of vigilance has been impaired by drugs, alcohol or exhaustion.
- Babies should not co-sleep with other children.
- Favour cotton bedding, which is both breathable and warm.
- Never smoke around a baby, and especially not in the room where your baby sleeps.



Position baby's feet at the bottom of the bed.

Avoid including anything in the cot which could cover baby's head (toys, pillows, cot bumpers, doonas).



Causes - Physical factors

A combination of physical and sleep environmental factors can make an infant more vulnerable to SIDS. These factors may vary from child to child.

Physical factors associated with SIDS include:

Brain abnormalities. Some infants are born with problems that make them more likely to die of SIDS. In many of these babies, the portion of the brain that controls breathing and arousal from sleep doesn't work properly.

Low birth weight. Premature birth or being part of a multiple birth increases the likelihood that a baby's brain hasn't matured completely, so he or she has less control over such automatic processes as breathing and heart rate.

Respiratory infection. Many infants who died of SIDS had recently had a cold, which may contribute to breathing problems.

Sleep environmental factors

The items in a baby's crib and his or her sleeping position can combine with a baby's physical problems to increase the risk of SIDS. Examples include:

Sleeping on the stomach or side. Babies who are placed on their stomachs or sides to sleep may have more difficulty breathing than those placed on their backs.

Sleeping on a soft surface. Lying face down on a fluffy comforter or a waterbed can block an infant's airway. Draping a blanket over a baby's head also is risky.

Sleeping with parents. While the risk of SIDS is lowered if an infant sleeps in the same room as his or her parents, the risk increases if the baby sleeps in the same bed — partly because there are more soft surfaces to impair breathing.



Risk factors

Although sudden infant death syndrome can strike any infant, researchers have identified several factors that may increase a baby's risk. They include:

Sex. Boys are more likely to die of SIDS.

Age. Infants are most vulnerable during the second and third months of life.

Race. For reasons that aren't well-understood, black, American Indian or Alaska Native infants are more likely to develop SIDS.

Family history. Babies who've had siblings or cousins die of SIDS are at higher risk of SIDS.

Secondhand smoke. Babies who live with smokers have a higher risk of SIDS.

Being premature. Both being born early and having low birth weight increase your baby's chances of SIDS.

Maternal risk factors

During pregnancy, the risk of SIDS is also affected by the mother, especially if she:

- Is younger than 20
- Smokes cigarettes
- Uses drugs or alcohol
- Has inadequate prenatal care

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SIDS and Kids Safe Sleeping application provides new and expectant mothers, carers and health care professionals with vital information on how to sleep baby safely and reduce the risk of sudden unexpected death in infants and fatal sleeping accidents. It also includes valuable information on Tummy Time and Safe Wrapping and links to our FAQs and the SIDS and Kids website for further information and support.

Visit: <http://www.sidsandkids.org/safe-sleeping/>

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Want more information?

SIDS and Kids

Phone 1800 308 307, 24 hours

For information about safe infant sleeping and bereavement support

www.sidsandkids.org

Parentline NSW

Phone 1300 1300 52

For advice on child health and parenting

www.parentline.org.au

Beyond Blue

Phone 1300 22 4636

Phone and online support if you are feeling low

www.beyondblue.org.au

PANDA (Post and Antenatal Depression Association)

Phone 1300 726 306

For information, support and counselling for new parents, family and friends

www.panda.org.au

Families NSW

Various resources to help parents at any stage in life.

www.families.nsw.gov.au

Local Services

Goonellabah Child & Family Health Service

Phone 02 6625 0111

9am – 4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

Lismore Community Health - Child and Family

Phone 02 6620 7687

8am – 5:00pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.