

Safe Sleep FAQs

Question:

I thought that vomiting infants might choke if they sleep on their backs.

Response:

That was the thinking years ago, but since launching a campaign urging parents to put their baby on his/her back to sleep, there has been a 50% decrease in SIDS deaths. Healthy babies naturally swallow or cough fluids - it's a reflex all people have. Babies are more likely to choke when they are on their stomach, as this picture shows.

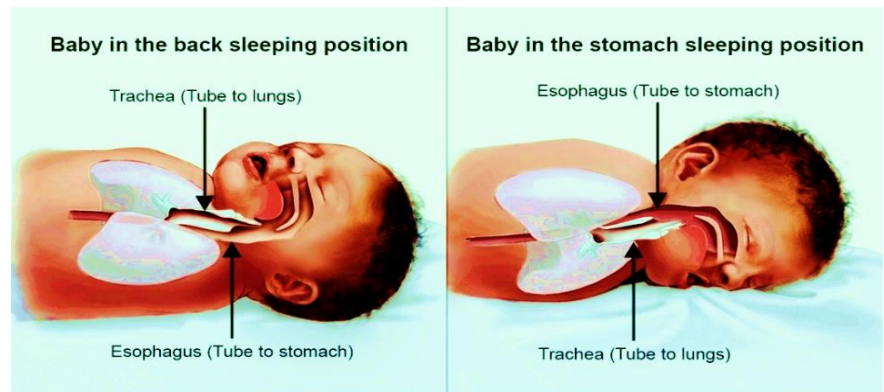


Image courtesy of the Safe to Sleep® campaign, for educational purposes only; Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids>; Safe to Sleep® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Question:

If my baby stops breathing, I need to be able to hear him; that's why I put him in bed with me.

Response:

Your baby should sleep in the same room as you but he is safest if he sleeps on his back in his own crib/bassinet. Infant deaths while sleeping are very quiet events. These deaths are usually the result of the infant suffocating because something prevented him from getting enough oxygen. Your baby won't cry or struggle; he'll just get weaker until he stops breathing entirely.

Question:

My baby won't go to sleep unless she's on her tummy.

Response:

You can help your baby learn to sleep safely. Start the habit of sleeping on her back as soon as you bring your baby home. Follow the same routine every time and put your baby down while she is drowsy but still awake. If your baby has been sleeping on her stomach, you may need to try some extra soothing techniques at first to get her used to this position.

Question:

I am so tired; and my baby will only sleep soundly when he's with me. I am desperate to get some sleep.

Response:

It is very difficult when you are so tired, but do you really want to take the chance? We know infants die in unsafe sleep situations. **Between 2007 and 2015 in Monroe County alone, we had 84 infant unsafe sleep deaths.** And we know that sleeping with another person is the number one cause of unsafe sleep deaths. Place the baby in a crib or bassinet next to your bed. Ask a family member or friend to watch your baby so you can catch up on your sleep.

(Over)

Question:

My baby doesn't like the crib; he just cries.

Response:

There are certainly a lot of things our children want that are not safe or good for them. It's our job to protect them and teach them. The earlier you start the habit of getting your baby comfortable in his own crib, the better. Falling asleep is a behavior that is learned; he can and will learn to fall asleep alone. Good sleep habits will help you both get better rest.

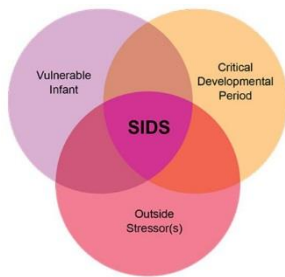
Question:

My mother slept with me. It is what we did in our family...and nothing happened.

Response:

Some families have a culture of bed sharing but while nothing may have happened in your family, there were and continue to be babies that die. In fact, most infant unsafe sleep deaths happen when sharing a sleep place with adults or children. Since our parents' time, we know much more about why babies die in their sleep.

Medical experts now believe that unsafe sleep deaths can occur if a baby experiences 2 or more of these risk factors at the same time:



1. **Vulnerable Baby:** The baby has an unknown physical defect or brain abnormality that could affect his/her breathing, heart rate or ability to wake up in response to getting less oxygen.
2. **Critical Developmental Period:** During a baby's first 6 months of life, growth spurts can briefly disrupt the infant's breathing, heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature.
3. **Outside Stressors:** The infant is placed in an unsafe sleep setting, exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke or has an upper respiratory tract infection. While most babies can survive these stressors, an already vulnerable baby may not be able to overcome them. These are only elements that parents and caregivers can control!

Placing your baby in a safe sleep setting is the best way to reduce the risk of suffocation!

Question:

My baby often falls asleep in his car seat. I don't want to wake him up so I think it's better to let him stay there, even at night.

Response:

Because car seats don't keep your baby flat on his back, he still is in danger of suffocation or asphyxia. If his chin and mouth slump towards his chest, he may not get enough oxygen. Babies should sleep in car seats only when they are in the car and only when supervised by an adult.

Question:

I want to breastfeed my baby and it is easier for both of us to be in the same bed.

Response:

Keep a bassinet right next to the bed (there are some that attach to the bed and have one open side). Your baby is safer when she has her own separate sleep space with no soft bedding or toys.

Question:

When my baby sleeps on his back, he develops a flat spot on his head and bald spots.

Response:

Talk to your doctor about ways to prevent these things. Babies spend most of their first six months of life on their backs. Providing supervised "tummy time" every day while awake, changing the direction your baby sleeps in each week to encourage him to turn his head in different directions, and cuddling him often so he is upright over one shoulder will all help prevent flat spots.