

SIDS

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant under one year old. SIDS, sometimes known as “crib death,” strikes nearly 5,000 babies in the United States every year. Doctors and nurses don’t know what causes SIDS, but they have found some things you can do to make your baby safer.

BACK TO SLEEP

Healthy babies should sleep on their backs. One of the most important things you can do to help reduce the risk of SIDS is to put your healthy baby on her back to sleep. Do this when your baby is being put down for a nap or going to sleep for the night.

Though the general rule is to put babies asleep on their back, 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.

Your baby can be placed on her stomach for short periods when awake. Some “tummy time” during awake hours is good for your baby. It helps develop neck muscles and avoid a misshapen head.

OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP REDUCE THE RISK OF SIDS:

- **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. Some babies have smothered with these soft materials in their cribs.
- **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 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.