



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SAFE SLEEP

What are the ABCs of Safe Sleep?

- **Alone** – Babies should sleep alone in their own sleep space, close to but separate from their caregiver. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to share a room with the infant, but avoid sleeping in the same bed.
- **Back** – Babies should be placed on their back to sleep. Studies show that placing infants on their back for all sleep times, including naps and at night, reduces the risk of SIDS.
- **Crib** – Babies should sleep in a crib or bassinet that meets standards set forth by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The mattress should be firm and covered with a tight-fitting sheet made specifically for the crib. There should be no blankets, quilts, crib bumpers, toys or any objects in baby's sleeping space.

What is SUID?

SUID is the death of an infant younger than 1 year of age that occurs suddenly and unexpectedly. SUID includes all unexpected deaths: those from a known cause, and those from unknown causes. SIDS and suffocation are both types of SUID. Many unexpected infant deaths are unintentional, but a known disease or something done on purpose can also cause a baby to die suddenly or unexpectedly. For some SUID, a cause is never found.

What is SIDS?

SIDS is the sudden death of an infant younger than 1 year of age that cannot be explained even after a full investigation that includes a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history.

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FAQ ABOUT SAFE SLEEP

How old are babies who die from SIDS?

The majority (90%) of SIDS deaths occur before a baby reaches 6 months of age, and the number of SIDS deaths peaks between 1 month and 4 months of age. However SIDS deaths can occur anytime during a baby's first year, so parents should still follow safe sleep recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS until their baby's first birthday.

What are other sleep-related causes of infant death?

Other sleep-related causes of infant death are those that occur in the sleep environment or during sleep time. They include accidental suffocation by bedding, overlay (when someone or something rolls against or on top of a baby and restricts breathing), entrapment (when a baby gets trapped between two objects, such as a mattress and wall, and can't breathe), or strangulation (when something presses on or wraps around a baby's neck, blocking the baby's airway). These deaths are not SIDS.

Why should a baby be placed on his or her back to sleep?

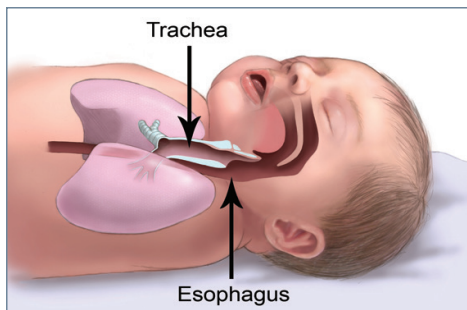
The back sleep position is the safest position for all babies, including those born early. You should always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, for all sleep times—for naps and at night—to reduce the risk of SIDS.

Remember that **every sleep time counts**. Babies who usually sleep on their backs but who are then placed to sleep on their stomachs, for a sleep time like a nap, are at an increased risk for SIDS.

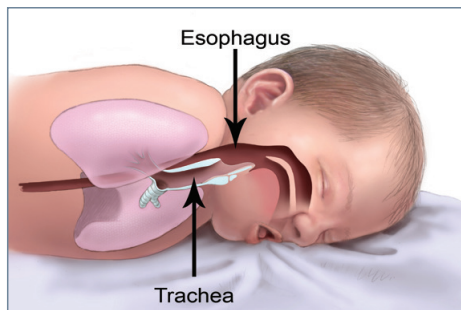
Everyone who cares for your baby should place him or her on their back to sleep for all sleep times, including naps.

Will a baby choke if placed on his or her back to sleep?

Healthy babies naturally swallow or cough up fluids—it's a reflex all people have to make sure their airway is kept clear. Babies clear such fluids better when on their backs because of the location of the windpipe (trachea) when in the back sleep position.



Less Risk of Choking
Gravity helps keep food and liquid out of trachea (airway).



Greater Risk of Choking
Gravity draws food and liquid into the trachea (airway).

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When the baby is in the back sleep position, the windpipe is on top of the esophagus, which leads to the stomach. Anything regurgitated or refluxed from the stomach through the esophagus has to work against gravity to enter the trachea and cause choking. Additionally, when the baby is sleeping on its stomach, fluids will exit the esophagus and pool at the opening for the trachea, making choking much more likely.

I was placed on my stomach to sleep as a baby. Why have the recommendations changed?

Until the early 1990's, we didn't know as much about SIDS or ways to reduce the risk of SIDS. The popular advice was to place babies on their stomachs to sleep, but the advice for stomach sleeping was not rooted in science.

Today research shows that the back sleep position is the safest sleep position for babies and carries the lowest risk for SIDS. SIDS deaths have dropped by 50 percent since the 1990's when the back sleep position became the recommendation.

Is it okay if a baby sleeps on his or her side?

Babies placed to sleep on their sides are at increased risk for SIDS. For this reason, babies should sleep on their backs—the position associated with the lowest SIDS risk.

If a baby rolls onto his or her stomach during sleep, does he or she need to be put in the back sleep position again?

Rolling over is an important and natural part of a baby's growth. Most babies start rolling over on their own around 4 to 6 months of age. If a baby rolls over on his or her own during sleep, you do not need to turn the baby over onto his or her back. The important thing is that a baby starts every sleep time on his or her back to reduce the risk of SIDS. When a baby does roll over it is very important that there is no soft, loose bedding in the baby's sleep area that could pose a risk for suffocation.

What if a baby's grandparents or another caregiver wants to place baby on his or her stomach for naps?

Babies who usually sleep on their backs but who are then placed to sleep on their stomachs, such as for a nap, are at very high risk for SIDS. It is important for everyone who cares for a baby to use the back sleep position for all sleep times—for naps and at night.

Are there times when a baby should be on his or her stomach?

Research shows that placing a baby on his or her tummy for short periods while the baby is awake and when someone is watching is an important part of healthy development. Supervised tummy time helps your baby's neck, shoulder, and arm muscles get stronger.

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When a baby is placed too often or for too long in the same position, pressure on the same part of the baby's head can cause flat spots. These flat spots are usually not dangerous, are not associated with long-term problems with head shape, and typically go away on their own once the baby starts sitting up. Tummy time can help prevent those flat spots.

Why shouldn't soft surfaces and soft coverings be used in a baby's sleep area?

Babies who sleep on soft surfaces or under a soft covering are at a higher risk for SIDS and specifically, suffocation. Babies should sleep in a crib or bassinet that meets standards set forth by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The mattress should be firm and covered with a tight-fitting sheet made specifically for the crib. There should be no blankets, quilts, crib bumpers, toys or any objects in baby's sleeping space.

Why shouldn't crib bumpers be used in a baby's sleep area?

Bumper pads and similar products that attach to crib slats or sides are frequently used with the intent of protecting infants from injury. However, evidence does not support using crib bumpers to prevent injury. In fact, crib bumpers can cause serious injuries and even death. Keeping them out of your baby's sleep area is the best way to avoid these dangers.

Why is tobacco use bad for a baby and his or her sleep?

Tobacco smoke is damaging to everyone's lungs, especially for the underdeveloped lungs of infants who are new to the world. Tobacco usage by mothers, while pregnant and after birth, has been linked to an increase risk for SIDS. Babies whose caregivers smoke or who are exposed to second-hand smoke in their environment are at higher risk for SIDS than babies not exposed to secondhand smoke. Do not smoke during pregnancy or after a baby is born, and don't let others smoke around a baby. For help quitting smoking the Georgia Tobacco Quit Line (GTQL) is available free of charge, 24/7.

Georgia Tobacco Quit Line (GTQL)

1-877-270-STOP (English)

1-877-2NO-FUME (Spanish)

1-877-777-6534 (Hearing Impaired)

SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx)

CDC SUID and SIDS (cdc.gov/sids/)

AAP Healthy Children Parent's Guide to Safe Sleep (healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx)