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Safe Sleep Tips

Excerpted from *Sleeping with Your Baby: A Parent's Guide to Cosleeping*

- ◆ Always lay your baby on his back.
- ◆ Your baby should sleep on a firm mattress with tight-fitting sheets. His or her face should be unobstructed by pillows, blankets or stuffed animals. The room should be a smoke-free setting.
- ◆ Mothers who smoked during pregnancy should NOT cosleep with their babies. Instead, the baby should sleep next to her on a separate surface. The same applies to a father or partner who smokes.
- ◆ Pull your bed away from walls and surrounding furniture into the center of the room. Strip away the metal or wood framework, and lay the boxspring on the floor with the mattress on top.
 - If you do not wish to pull your bed apart and place it in the center of the room, you must look for gaps and holes around the bed, and inspect the furniture and other objects which surround the mattress. Make sure no furniture is too close to the mattress and that your headboard, footboard and frame are tightly pressed into the mattress as well. The goal is to prevent the baby from falling into a hole.
- ◆ If you are breastfeeding and cosleeping, remember to keep the thermostat at a slightly lower temperature. Since your own body will provide heat for your baby, you'll want to make sure he or she doesn't overheat.
- ◆ Use hard, angular pillows, and keep them pushed away from your baby's face.
- ◆ Light blankets are best. Sleep suits might work well for your baby.
- ◆ For obese parents: the extra weight may create a depression or space your baby can fall into. A particularly stiff mattress may help prevent this problem.
 - Bedsharing should be avoided if a parent is obese, there are no plans to breastfeed the baby, and other risk factors exist.
- ◆ Keep your baby away from duvets or heavy blankets that can flop over and cover his or her face or nose.
- ◆ Keep other children out of your bed when your baby is sleeping in it.
- ◆ Do not bedshare if you or your partner feel cramped in your bed, or if the bed is less than a full or queen size.
- ◆ Avoid sleeping on the new folded mattresses. Never bedshare on a waterbed.

Source: *Sleeping with Your Baby: A Parent's Guide to Cosleeping*

McKenna, Ph.D., James. *Sleeping with Your Baby: A Parent's Guide to Cosleeping*. Platypus Media. 2007. ISBN: 1930775342.

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The Dos and Don'ts of Cosleeping

Excerpted from *Sleeping with Your Baby: A Parent's Guide to Cosleeping*

Do

- ◆ Make sure the baby is sleeping on a clean, firm, non-quilted surface. A mattress in the middle of the room without a frame is ideal.
- ◆ Provide a smoke free environment for your baby! If either parent smokes (no matter where you smoke), do not let your baby sleep in bed with you.
- ◆ Place the baby on her back to sleep. If you breastfeed in bed, make sure the baby is on her back at the end of the feed.

Don't

- ◆ Bedshare if either parent has consumed sedatives, medications, alcohol, or any substance that causes altered consciousness or marked drowsiness.
- ◆ Bedshare if either parent is ill, tired to the point where it would be difficult to respond to the baby, or if either parent realizes that the primary caregiver is much more tired than usual
- ◆ Bedshare if there is any space between the bed and the wall where the baby could roll and become trapped. Make sure that the mattress fits tightly against the headboard and footboard and remove the bed frame if at all possible.
- ◆ Bedshare if the parent sleeping next to the baby is markedly obese, unless the mother is breastfeeding and has considered how to compensate in some way for the greater weight differential.
- ◆ Bedshare if older siblings who do not understand the risks of suffocation are sleeping in the same bed with infants less than one year old.
- ◆ Bedshare if pets will be sharing the bed with the baby.
- ◆ Place babies in an adult bed alone and unsupervised. Never leave an infant alone on an adult bed.
- ◆ Use thick bedding. Sheets and blankets should be porous, preferably cotton. In cold weather, use layers of thin bedding rather than one heavier blanket.
- ◆ Allow anything to cover the head or face of the baby.
- ◆ Dress your baby too warmly—if you are comfortable, your baby probably is too. Remember that close bodily contact increases body temperature.
- ◆ Leave long hair down or wear nightclothes with strings or ties. These pose a strangulation risk for the baby.

Source: *Sleeping with Your Baby: A Parent's Guide to Cosleeping*
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Platypus Media. 2007. ISBN: 1930775342.

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Safe Sleep Saves Lives

Excerpted from www.FirstCandle.org

One of the most important decisions you will make as a new parent is where and how you place your baby to sleep. If you follow these safe sleep rules, you will help protect your baby from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), suffocation and accidents during sleep.

- ◆ Always place your baby to sleep on his back. Side and tummy positions are not safe.
- ◆ Use a crib that meets current safety standards. The mattress should be firm and fit snugly in the crib. Cover the mattress with only a tight-fitting crib sheet. Portable cribs and play yard style cribs are also good choices.
- ◆ Do not put anything soft, loose or fluffy in your baby's sleep space. This includes pillows, blankets, comforters, soft or pillow-like bumpers, stuffed animals and other soft items.
- ◆ Use a sleep sack or other type sleeper instead of blankets to keep your baby warm and safe.
- ◆ Place your baby's separate, safe sleep space near your bed to help you protect her and make breastfeeding easier. This is called room sharing.
- ◆ Falling asleep with your baby in bed or on a couch or armchair is dangerous. Room share instead.
- ◆ Never place your baby to sleep on top of any soft surface. This includes adult beds, waterbeds, pillows, cushions, comforters and sheepskins.
- ◆ Do not use wedges or positioners to prop your baby up or keep him on his back.
- ◆ Make sure your baby doesn't get too warm during sleep. Use light sleep clothing and keep room temperature at what would be comfortable for a lightly-clothed adult.
- ◆ Offer your baby a pacifier every time you place her down to sleep. If you are breastfeeding, wait until nursing is well established before using a pacifier (usually around 1 month.)
- ◆ Educate everyone who cares for your baby about these safe sleep rules!



Other Important Tips

- ◆ Do not smoke when you are pregnant and make sure that no one smokes around your baby after he is born.
- ◆ Get good prenatal care as soon as you know you are pregnant and keep all your doctor's appointments.
- ◆ If possible, give your baby only breast milk for at least the first six months.
- ◆ Give your baby lots of tummy time when she is awake and being watched. This helps make her arm and neck muscles strong and prevents flat spots on the back of her head.

Source: *FirstCandle.org*

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This information can be found at: <http://67.19.129.114/~candle/cms/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/SafeSleepSavesLives.pdf>



Sharing a Bed With Your Baby: A guide for breastfeeding mothers

Excerpted from <http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk/>

Breastfeeding is best for your baby's health and your own health. The longer you breastfeed, the greater the health benefits for you both.

It is recommended that your baby shares a room with you for at least the first 6 months, as this helps with breastfeeding and protects babies against cot death.

Bringing your baby into bed with you means that you can breastfeed in comfort. This may be why mothers who share a bed with their baby tend to breastfeed for longer than those who don't.

As it is easy to fall asleep while breastfeeding, especially when lying down, there are some important points to consider before taking your baby into bed with you.

In particular, adult beds are not designed with infant safety in mind. Babies can die if they get trapped or wedged in the bed or if a parent lies on them. So the safest place for a baby to sleep is in a cot by your bed.

However, you can reduce the risk of accidents and, because bed sharing helps with breastfeeding, you may find this leaflet useful.

Important – when not to sleep with your baby

Smoking increases the risk of cot death. You should make sure that you don't fall asleep with your baby in your bed if you (or any other person in the bed) are a smoker, even if you never smoke in bed. Falling asleep with your baby is also dangerous if you (or any other person in the bed) might find it hard to respond to the baby. For example if you:

- ◆ have drunk alcohol
- ◆ have taken any drug (legal or illegal) which could make you extra sleepy
- ◆ have any illness or condition that affects your awareness of your baby
- ◆ are otherwise unusually tired to a point where you would find it difficult to respond to your baby.

It also may be safest not to bed share in the early months if your baby was born preterm, was small at birth or if he has a high temperature.

Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair. Sofas are very dangerous for babies as they can become trapped down the sides or in the cushions.

Reduce the risks of accidents and overheating

Sofas are very dangerous for babies. Never lie down or fall asleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair. Adult beds are not designed for babies. To prevent your baby overheating, suffocating or becoming trapped:

- ◆ The mattress must be firm and flat – waterbeds, bean bags and sagging mattresses are not suitable;
- ◆ Make sure that your baby can't fall out of bed or get stuck between the mattress and the wall;



Sharing a Bed With Your Baby: A guide for breastfeeding mothers *continued*

- ◆ The room must not be too hot (16–18°C is ideal);
- ◆ Your baby should not be overdressed – he should not wear any more clothes than you would wear in bed yourself;
- ◆ The covers must not overheat the baby or cover the baby's head;
- ◆ Your baby must not be left alone in or on the bed as even very young babies can wriggle into dangerous positions;
- ◆ Your partner should know if your baby is in the bed;
- ◆ If an older child is also sharing your bed, you or your partner should sleep between the child and the baby;
- ◆ Pets should not share a bed with your baby.

If you have any questions, your midwife or health visitor will be able to advise.

Your sleeping position

If you are bed sharing, it is important to make sure that your baby cannot go under the covers or into the pillow. Most mothers who are breastfeeding naturally sleep facing their baby with their body in a position that protects the baby by stopping him moving up or down the bed (see picture). Your baby will usually lie on his side to breastfeed. When not actually feeding, he should be put on his back to sleep, never on his front or side. If you are bottle feeding the safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot by your bed.



Source: *UNICEF and the Baby Friendly Initiative and the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths*
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This information can be found at <http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk/pdfs/sharingbedleaflet.pdf>



Safe Sleeping with Your Baby

Excerpted from www.AskDrSears.com

Here are some ways to educate parents on how to sleep safely with their baby:

- ◆ Use an Arm's Reach Co-Sleeper Bassinet. An alternative to sleeping with baby in your bed is the Arm's Reach Co-Sleeper. This crib-like bed fits safely and snugly adjacent to parent's bed. The co-sleeper arrangement gives parents and baby their own separate sleeping spaces yet, keeps baby within arm's reach for an easy nighttime care. To learn more about the Arm's Reach Co-Sleeper Bassinet visit www.armsreach.com.
- ◆ Take precautions to prevent baby from rolling out of bed, even though it is unlikely when baby is sleeping next to mother. Like heat-seeking missiles, babies automatically gravitate toward a warm body. Yet, to be safe, place baby between mother and a guardrail or push the mattress flush against the wall and position baby between mother and the wall. Guardrails enclosed with plastic mesh are safer than those with slats, which can entrap baby's limbs or head. Be sure the guardrail is flush against the mattress so there is no crevice that baby could sink into.
- ◆ Place baby adjacent to mother, rather than between mother and father. Mothers we have interviewed on the subject of sharing sleep feel they are so physically and mentally aware of their baby's presence even while sleeping, that it's extremely unlikely they would roll over onto their baby. Some fathers, on the other hand, may not enjoy the same sensitivity of baby's presence while asleep; so it is possible they might roll over on or throw out an arm onto baby. After a few months of sleep-sharing, most dads seem to develop a keen awareness of their baby's presence.
- ◆ Place baby to sleep on his back.
- ◆ Use a large bed, preferably a queen-size or king-size. A king-size bed may wind up being your most useful piece of "baby furniture." If you only have a cozy double bed, use the money that you would ordinarily spend on a fancy crib and other less necessary baby furniture and treat yourselves to a safe and comfortable king-size bed.
- ◆ Some parents and babies sleep better if baby is still in touching and hearing distance, but not in the same bed. For them, a bedside co-sleeper is a safe option.

Here are some things to avoid:

- ◆ Do NOT sleep with your baby if:
 - You are under the influence of any drug (such as alcohol or tranquilizing medications) that diminishes your sensitivity to your baby's presence. If you are drunk or drugged, these chemicals lessen your arousability from sleep.
 - You are extremely obese. Obesity itself may cause sleep apnea in the mother, in addition to the smothering danger of pendulous breasts and large fat rolls.
 - You are exhausted from sleep deprivation. This lessens your awareness of your baby and your arousability from sleep.
 - You are breastfeeding a baby on a cushiony surface, such as a waterbed or couch. An exhausted mother could fall asleep breastfeeding and roll over on the baby.



Safe Sleeping with Your Baby *continued*

- You are the child's baby-sitter. A baby-sitter's awareness and arousability is unlikely to be as acute as a mother's.
- ◆ Don't allow older siblings to sleep with a baby under nine months. Sleeping children do not have the same awareness of tiny babies as do parents, and too small or too crowded a bed space is an unsafe sleeping arrangement for a tiny baby.
- ◆ Don't fall asleep with baby on a couch. Baby may get wedged between the back of the couch and the larger person's body, or baby's head may become buried in cushion crevices or soft cushions.
- ◆ Do not sleep with baby on a free-floating, wavy waterbed or similar "sinky" surface in which baby could suffocate.
- ◆ Don't overheat or overbundle baby. Be particularly aware of overbundling if baby is sleeping with a parent. Other warm bodies are an added heat source.
- ◆ Don't wear lingerie with string ties longer than eight inches. Ditto for dangling jewelry. Baby may get caught in these entrapments.
- ◆ Avoid pungent hair sprays, deodorants, and perfumes. Not only will these camouflage the natural maternal smells that baby is used to and attracted to, but foreign odors may irritate and clog baby's tiny nasal passages. Reserve these enticements for sleeping alone with your spouse.

Parents should use common sense when sharing sleep. Anything that could cause you to sleep more soundly than usual or that alters your sleep patterns can affect your baby's safety. Nearly all the highly suspected (but seldom proven) cases of fatal "overlying" I could find in the literature could have been avoided if parents had observed common sense sleeping practices.

The bottom line is that many parents share sleep with their babies. It can be done safely if the proper precautions are observed. The question shouldn't be "is it safe to sleep with my baby?", but rather "how can I sleep with my baby safely." The data on the incidence of SIDS in a bed versus a crib must be examined before the medical community can make a judgment on sleep safety in a bed.

Source: *AskDrSears.com*

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This information can be found at <http://askdrsears.com/html/10/t102200.asp>



A Parent's Guide to Safe Sleep: Helping you to reduce the risk of SIDS

Excerpted from <http://www.aap.org>

Did You Know?

- ◆ About one in five sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) deaths occur while an infant is in the care of someone other than a parent. Many of these deaths occur when babies who are used to sleeping on their backs at home are then placed to sleep on their tummies by another caregiver. We call this "unaccustomed tummy sleeping."
- ◆ Unaccustomed tummy sleeping increases the risk of SIDS. Babies who are used to sleeping on their backs and are placed to sleep on their tummies are 18 times more likely to die from SIDS. **You can reduce your baby's risk of dying of SIDS by talking to those who care for your baby, including child care providers, babysitters, family, and friends, about placing your baby to sleep on his back at night and during naps.**

Who is at Risk for SIDS?:

- ◆ SIDS is the leading cause of death for infants between 1 month and 12 months of age.
- ◆ SIDS is most common among infants that are 2-4 months old. However, babies can die of SIDS until they are 1 year old.

What can I do before my baby is born to reduce the risk of SIDS?

Take care of yourself during pregnancy and after the birth of your baby. During pregnancy, before you even give birth, you can reduce the risk of your baby dying from SIDS! **Don't smoke or expose yourself to others' smoke while you are pregnant and after the baby is born.** Be sure to visit a physician for regular prenatal checkups to reduce your risk of having a low birth weight or premature baby. Breastfeed your baby, if possible, at least through the first year of life.

Know the truth...

SIDS is not caused by:

- ◆ Immunizations
- ◆ Vomiting or choking

What can I do to help spread the word about Back to Sleep?

- ◆ Be aware of safe sleep practices and how they can be made a part of our everyday lives.
- ◆ When shopping in stores with crib displays that show heavy quilts, pillows, and stuffed animals, talk to the manager about safe sleep, and ask them not to display cribs in this way.
- ◆ Monitor the media. When you see an ad or a picture in the paper that shows a baby sleeping on her tummy, write a letter to the editor.
- ◆ If you know teenagers who take care of babies, talk with them. They may need help with following the proper safe sleep practices.



A Parent's Guide to Safe Sleep: Helping you to reduce the risk of SIDS *continued*

- ◆ Set a good example – realize that you may not have slept on your back as a baby, but we now know that this is the safest way for babies to sleep. When placing babies to sleep, be sure to always place them on their backs.

It is easy and free to make safe sleep practices a part of your daily life.

This way, you will know that you are doing all that you can to keep your baby healthy and safe. Do your best to follow the guidelines above.

Where is the safest place for my baby to sleep?

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in the room where you sleep. Place the baby's crib or bassinet near your bed (within an arm's reach). This makes it easier to breastfeed and to bond with your baby. The crib or bassinet should be free from toys, soft bedding, blankets, and pillows.

Source: *Healthy Child Care America (A program of the American Academy of Pediatrics)*

The American Academy of Pediatrics

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This information can be found at <http://www.healthychildcare.org/pdf/SIDSparentsafesleep.pdf>.