

SIDS Risk Reduction

SIDS seldom occurs to infants younger than one month, and is most frequent after a baby is able to roll over on its own, from 4 to 6 months. It rarely occurs after 8 months.

Putting a baby to sleep on his or her back has been proven to reduce the occurrence of SIDS. Having a baby sleep on the tummy, or on the side, does not prevent the child from inhaling spit or vomit. Supine (on the back) sleeping is not a greater risk for aspiration.

Being on a non-infant bed has been shown to be associated with SIDS. Infant beds do not cause "Crib Death." That is another name for SIDS. Waterbeds, sheepskins, sofas, or soft mattresses can keep the baby from getting enough air. Baby beds need to be firm.

Tragically, some babies die while sleeping with other people in the same bed. At the least, a baby should not be sleeping in the same bed with another child, with an adult who has been drinking or using drugs, or with a very fat adult. Bed sharing or co-sleeping is a risk for accidental suffocation.

If the mother smoked during her pregnancy or if the baby is exposed to 2nd hand smoke, then there is an increased risk of SIDS.

Breastfeeding helps lower the risk of SIDS by making the baby feel loved and nurtured. Breastfeeding creates a bond between the mother and child, reduces stress, and creates a sense of well being. It also helps the mother to lose weight and gives the baby resistance to some diseases until the immune system develops.

A baby can lose body heat quickly, but some people over do keeping a baby warm. Over heating increases the risk for SIDS. The guideline is not to cover or dress a baby more than what is comfortable in a particular environment. Too many covers, especially soft fluffy covers, sheepskins, and soft toys can reduce air circulation for a baby.

Even with using all of the risk reductions, some babies still die of SIDS. We don't know why. Nevertheless, the reduction in the rate of SIDS deaths since the start of the Back To Sleep campaign is so great that supine sleeping should not be ignored as the primary method of risk reduction.

Regular visits to the pediatric clinic are important to assure keeping babies healthy.