

SIDS: Back to Sleep



Losing a baby to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is a tragedy that grieves parents, family members, friends, and others who care for the child. The good news is that all of those who provide care for an infant can help reduce the risk of SIDS.

★ What is SIDS?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is the cause given when an infant dies suddenly and no other cause can be found. SIDS is also known as crib death. Fortunately, SIDS is rare. In 2006, about one out of 2,000 infants born in the United States died of SIDS before their first birthdays. Approximately 20% of SIDS deaths occur in child care settings.

★ What can we do to lower the risk?

- Obtain early, regular prenatal care. Good prenatal care reduces such risk factors as the baby being born early or having a low birth weight.
- Always put babies to sleep on their backs, not their stomachs. An exception should be made if a doctor recommends other positions because of a baby's medical condition. Research shows that babies who sleep on their backs show a decrease in the risk of SIDS and a decrease in the number of fevers, stuffy noses, and ear infections. No increase in choking was found among babies who sleep on their backs.
- Avoid exposing a baby to smoke. Do not smoke during pregnancy, and do not smoke around a baby.
- Make the baby's crib as safe as you can. Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission before using an old crib. A baby should not share a bed with other children. The mattress should be firm, with no pillows, quilts, or soft toys. Keep blankets and other coverings away from the baby's mouth and nose. A baby should be warm, but not overheated.
- Consider offering a pacifier at naptime and bedtime during the first year and consider using a fan in the baby's room. Research indicates a possible link between both practices and a lower risk of SIDS.
- Do not depend on baby monitors to reduce SIDS unless advised by a doctor. Recent research found no evidence that home monitoring decreases the risk of SIDS.

★ What about "tummy time"?

Provide "tummy time" while the baby is awake and being observed. This can help motor development and help prevent flat spots from forming on the back of the baby's head. A baby can usually roll over alone around 4-5 months. After that, you will not need to keep moving the baby onto his back. Sleeping on the back and supervised playing on the tummy are both good for infants.

★ For related Web resources, see "SIDS: Back to Sleep" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

The opinions, resources, and referrals provided in this Tip Sheet are intended for information purposes only and should not be considered or used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We advise parents to seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider with questions regarding their child's health or medical conditions.

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29 Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerry Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7468
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732
Toll-free: 877-275-3227 (Voice/TTY)
Email: iel@uiuc.edu
Internet: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

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