

# Safe Sleep For Your Grandbaby



**SAFE TO SLEEP**

®

**Reduce the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Other Sleep-Related Causes of Infant Death**



*Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development



***This is what a safe sleep environment looks like. It has no bumpers, pillows, blankets, or toys.***

# What is SIDS?

SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of a baby younger than 1 year of age that doesn't have a known cause even after a complete investigation.

Each year in the United States, thousands of babies die suddenly and unexpectedly. These deaths are called SUID (pronounced SOO-idd), which stands for "Sudden Unexpected Infant Death."

## Fast facts about SIDS:

- SIDS is the leading cause of death in babies 1 month to 1 year of age.
- Most SIDS deaths happen when babies are between 1 month and 4 months of age.

SUID includes all unexpected deaths: those without a clear cause, such as SIDS, and those from a known cause, such as suffocation. One-half of all SUID cases are SIDS. Many unexpected infant deaths are accidents, but a disease or something done on purpose can also cause a baby to die suddenly and unexpectedly.

Sleep-related causes of infant death are those linked to how or where a baby sleeps or slept. They are due to accidental causes, such as: suffocation; entrapment, when 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 baby's neck, blocking baby's airway. These deaths are not SIDS.

As a grandparent, you play an important role in reducing your grandbaby's risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death.



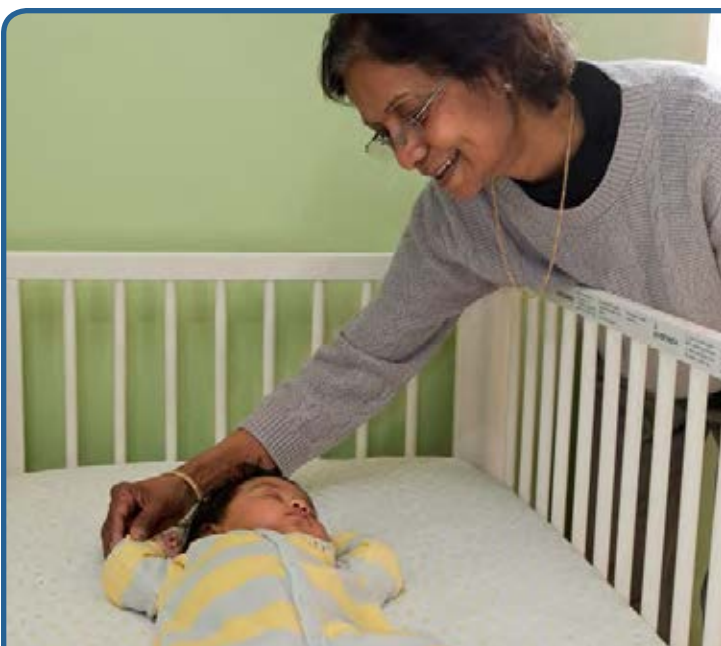
## What should I know about SIDS?

### ■ We have made great progress in reducing SIDS.

Since awareness campaigns that stressed back sleeping for babies started in 1994, the SIDS rate in the United States has dropped by 50 percent. This decreased rate equals thousands of babies' lives and is a result of parents and caregivers placing babies on their backs to sleep.

- In 1994, 4,073 babies died from SIDS and only 27 percent of babies slept on their backs. In 2009, 2,226 babies died from SIDS and 74 percent of babies slept on their backs.
- In 1994, 1,235 African American babies died from SIDS. In 2009, 665 African American babies died from SIDS.
- In 1995, 77 American Indian/Alaska Native babies died from SIDS. In 2009, 52 American Indian/Alaska Native babies died from SIDS.
- Despite these decreases, African American and American Indian/Alaska Native babies are at higher risk for SIDS, based on their numbers within the U.S. population, than are Hispanic American, Asian American, or white babies.

- **Babies sleep safest on their backs.** Babies who sleep on their backs are much less likely to die of SIDS than are babies who sleep on their stomachs or sides.
- **Every sleep time counts.** Babies should sleep on their backs for all sleep times—for naps and at night. Babies who are used to sleeping on their backs but who are then placed on their stomachs to sleep, like for a nap, are at very high risk for SIDS. Because of this added risk, make sure that you place your grandbaby on his or her back to sleep for all sleep times—including naps.
- **Sleep surface matters.** Babies who sleep *on a soft surface*, such as an adult bed, or *under a soft covering*, such as a soft blanket or quilt, are more likely to die of SIDS or suffocation.



***Always place your grandbaby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night.***

## What can I do to lower my grandbaby's risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death?

There is no sure way to prevent SIDS, but grandparents, parents, and caregivers can take these steps to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death:

- **Always place a baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night, to reduce the risk of SIDS.** The back sleep position is the safest position for all babies, including preterm babies. Keep in mind that every sleep time counts.



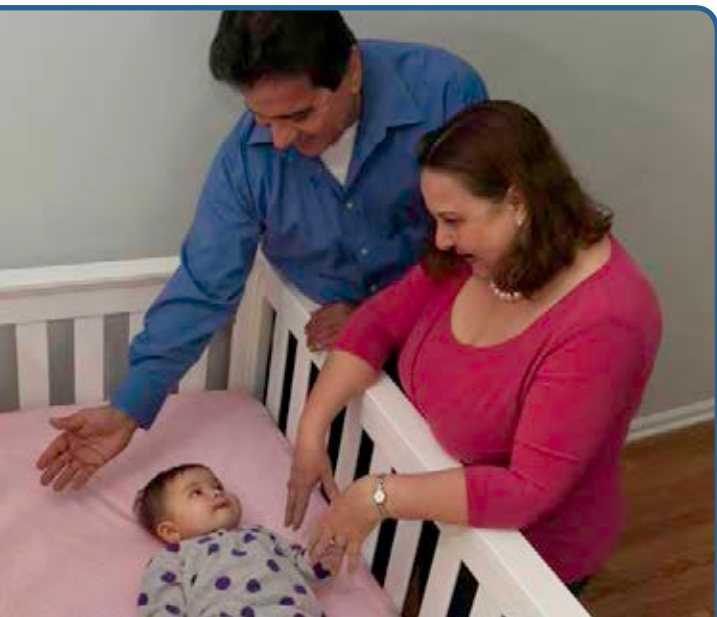


- **Use a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved\* crib, covered by a fitted sheet, to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death.** Firm sleep surfaces can include safety-approved\* cribs, bassinets, and portable play areas. Do not use a car seat, carrier, swing, or similar product as baby's everyday sleep area. Never place baby to sleep on soft surfaces, such as on a couch or sofa, pillows, quilts, sheepskins, or blankets.

\* For information on crib safety, contact the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

- **The baby should not sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, or on a chair alone, with you, or with anyone else.** Room sharing—keeping baby's sleep area in the same room where you sleep—reduces the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. If you bring your grandbaby into your bed to feed him or her, make sure to put him or her back in a separate sleep area in your room, such as a safety-approved\* crib, bassinet, or portable play area, when you are finished.

- **Keep soft objects, toys, crib bumpers, and loose bedding out of your grandbaby's sleep area to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death.** Don't use pillows, blankets, quilts, sheepskins, or crib bumpers anywhere in your grandbaby's sleep area. 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 the sleep area is the best way to avoid these dangers.
- **To reduce the risk of SIDS, women should:**
  - Get regular health care during pregnancy, and
  - Not smoke, drink alcohol, or use illegal drugs during pregnancy or after the baby is born.
- **To reduce the risk of SIDS, women should not smoke during pregnancy, and you should not smoke or allow smoking around your grandbaby.**



***All babies, even those born preterm, should be placed to sleep on their backs for all sleep times—naps too!***





- **Breastfeed your baby to reduce the risk of SIDS.** Breastfeeding has many health benefits for mother and baby.

- **Give your grandbaby a dry pacifier that is not attached to a string for naps and at night to reduce the risk of SIDS.** But don't force the baby to use it. If the pacifier falls out of baby's mouth during sleep, there is no need to put the pacifier back in. Wait until baby is used to breastfeeding before trying a pacifier.

- **Do not let your grandbaby get too hot during sleep.** Dress your grandbaby in no more than one layer more of clothing than an adult would wear to be comfortable. Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.

If you bring your grandbaby into your bed to feed him or her, make sure to put him or her back in a separate sleep area in your room, such as a safety-approved\* crib (see page 5), when you are finished.

- **Follow health care provider guidance on the baby's vaccines and regular health checkups.**
- **Avoid products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death.**  
These wedges, positioners, and other products have not been tested for safety or effectiveness.
- **Do not use home heart or breathing monitors to reduce the risk of SIDS.** If you have questions about using these monitors for other health conditions, talk with the baby's health care provider.
- **Give your grandbaby plenty of Tummy Time when he or she is awake and when someone is watching.** Supervised Tummy Time helps your grandbaby's neck, shoulder, and arm muscles get stronger. It also helps to prevent flat spots on the back of your grandbaby's head. Holding baby upright and limiting time in carriers and bouncers can also help prevent flat spots on the back of baby's head.

*Place babies on their stomachs when they are awake and when someone is watching. Tummy Time helps your grandbaby's head, neck, and shoulder muscles get stronger and helps to prevent flat spots on the head.*





## Answers to common questions about SIDS

**Q** I placed my babies to sleep on their stomachs, and they are fine. Was that wrong?

**A** Prior to 1992, most babies slept on their stomachs—and many of them survived. But many babies died. We now know that the back sleep position is the safest and poses the lowest risk for SIDS. Therefore, placing your grandbaby on his or her back to sleep for every sleep time is the best way to reduce the risk of SIDS.

**Q** Will my grandbaby choke if placed on the back to sleep?

**A** No. Healthy babies naturally swallow or cough up fluids—it's a reflex all people have. Babies might actually clear such fluids better when on their backs.

**Q** What if my grandbaby rolls onto the stomach on his or her own during sleep? Do I need to put my grandbaby in the back sleep position again if this happens?

**A** No. Rolling over is an important and natural part of your grandbaby's growth. Most babies start rolling over on their own around 4 to 6 months of age. If your grandbaby 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 the baby start off every sleep time on his or her back to reduce the risk of SIDS, and that there is no soft, loose bedding in the baby's sleep area.

# Spread the word!

Make sure *everyone* who cares for your grandbaby knows the ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. Remember: Babies sleep safest on their backs, and every sleep time counts!

Help family members, babysitters, daycare workers—**EVERYONE**—reduce your grandbaby's risk of SIDS and ensure a safe sleep area for your grandbaby. Share these safe sleep messages with everyone who cares for your grandbaby or for any baby younger than 1 year of age.

For more information, contact the Safe to Sleep® campaign:

**Mail:** 31 Center Drive, 31/2A32, Bethesda, MD 20892-2425

**Phone:** 1-800-505-CRIB (2742)

**Fax:** 1-866-760-5947

**Website:** <http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov>

Safe to Sleep campaign collaborators include:

*Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health  
and Human Development

Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal  
and Child Health Bureau

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of  
Reproductive Health

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

First Candle

Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs



NIH Pub. No. 13-4978  
October 2013



*Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute  
of Child Health and Human Development

Safe to Sleep® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.