



# NEWS

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## **Baby Care 101 – Safe Sleep**

**Norristown, PA (April 16, 2013)** – Since newborns sleep about 16 hours a day, it's important to know how to help protect them from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep related dangers, like suffocation.

SIDS is the sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant under one year of age that cannot be attributed to other causes. Most SIDS deaths occur when a baby is between two and four months old. Approximately ninety percent of all SIDS deaths occur before a baby is six months old.

Suffocation often occurs when heavy bedding material, like blankets or crib bumpers, blocks fresh air flow to a baby's mouth and nose. Some infants have suffocated by being wedged into the edges of the bed or couch. Sadly, many infants have been suffocated when a larger person rolls on top of them when sharing a bed.

Here are some tips to keep babies safe and reduce the chances of SIDS or other sleep-related dangers:

- During pregnancy, get early prenatal care checkups.
- The best place for a baby to sleep is in his or her bassinet or crib, placed close to a parent's bed at night. Share the bedroom with the baby, not the bed.
- Always place the baby to sleep on his or her back until age 1 on a flat, firm surface, with a tight fitting crib mattress covered with a fitted sheet. Use the mattress specifically designed for the babies' crib.
- Don't use cribs with drop-side rails, since they have been recalled. Don't try and fix a crib that has broken or has missing parts.
- Create a sleep safety zone by removing all soft, fluffy, or loose bedding, blankets, bumpers, wedges, and toys from the crib. Never place additional padding under an infant.

- Don't let a baby sleep in his or her carrier, swing, car seat, or stroller. Babies who sleep in these items can suffocate if the position of their necks blocks their air flow. If a baby falls asleep in one of these places, take him or her out and place them in a crib as soon as possible.
- Give the baby a pacifier for naps and at bedtime. Pacifiers may help protect against SIDS. Don't force the use of a pacifier if the baby refuses it. Don't hang a pacifier around a baby's neck or attach it to their clothing.
- There is no proof that any special products, such as wedges, reduce SIDS. There is no evidence that monitors help reduce the risk of SIDS in healthy babies.
- Overheating infants is not safe, so keep the room at a comfortable temperature. Dress babies in light sleep clothes. Remove strings or ties from their clothes and keep their heads uncovered. A blanket sleeper will keep the baby safe.
- Remove any hanging window cords and electrical wires where a baby can get tangled and choke.
- Feed babies breast milk or formula for at least six months. No solid food is recommended until the infant is six months old.
- Do not smoke, drink alcohol, or take drugs, unless prescribed by a doctor, during pregnancy.
- Take babies to all their well-baby visits and make sure they get their vaccinations on time.
- Give babies "tummy time" every day. "Tummy time" is when a baby is placed on his or her stomach on a firm surface for a brief period of time. This position helps the baby develop his or her neck, shoulder, and arm muscles.

The Montgomery County "Cribs for Kids Program" is available for those who cannot afford a safe place for their baby to sleep. The Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD) receives referrals for this program from community agencies. This is a donation and grant based program, and "pack 'n play" style cribs are distributed as they are available. To learn more about the "Cribs for Kids Program," please visit <http://www.montcopa.org/?nid=1127>.