



Place your baby on his or her stomach for “tummy time” when he or she is awake, and someone is watching. This helps your baby’s neck and shoulder muscles get stronger.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Is there a risk of choking when my baby sleeps on his or her back?**

**A.** No, babies automatically swallow or cough up fluids. Doctors have found no increase in choking or other problems in babies sleeping on their backs.

**Q. What about side sleeping?**

**A.** To keep your baby safest when he or she is sleeping, **always use the back sleep position rather than the side position.** Babies who sleep on their sides can roll onto their stomachs. A baby sleeping on his or her stomach is at greater risk of SIDS.

Some infants may have health conditions that require them to sleep on their stomachs.

If you are unsure about the best sleep position for your baby, be sure to talk to your doctor or nurse.

**Some products claim to be designed to keep a baby in one position. These products have not been tested for safety and are NOT recommended.**

**Q. Are there times when my baby can be on his or her stomach?**

**A.** Yes, place your baby on his or her stomach for “tummy time,” when he or she is awake and someone is watching. When the baby is awake, tummy time is good because it helps your baby’s neck and shoulder muscles get stronger.

**Q. Can I bring my baby in bed with me to breastfeed?**

**A.** Bringing your baby into bed could be risky for your baby. An adult bed usually has a soft mattress and bedding such as comforters, quilts, and pillows. If you choose to bring your baby in bed with you to breastfeed, it is safest to return your baby to his or her crib.\*\* One way to keep your baby close to you is by having the baby’s crib in the room with you.

\*\*If you do not have a crib, check with your state health department about a crib donation program.

**Q. Can my baby share a bed with her brother or sister?**

**A.** Bed-sharing with other children, including brothers and sisters is unsafe for your baby. It increases the risk for SIDS as well as suffocation. There have been reports of infants being suffocated from overlying by an adult, brother, sister, or other family member that was sharing a bed with an infant.

**Q. Will my baby get “flat spots” on his or her head from back sleeping?**

**A.** For the most part, flat spots on the back of the baby’s head go away a few months after the baby learns to sit up. Tummy time, when your baby is awake, is one way to reduce flat spots. Another way is to change the direction you place your baby down to sleep. Doing this means the baby is not always sleeping on the same side of his or her head. If you think your baby has a more serious problem, talk to your doctor or nurse.

Enjoy Your Baby!



# SAFE SLEEP FOR YOUR BABY

Reduce the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)



For more information on sleep position for babies and reducing the risk of SIDS, contact the *Back to Sleep* campaign at:  
**1-800-505-CRIB**  
 31 Center Drive, 31/2A32, Bethesda, MD 20892  
 Fax: (301)496-7101  
 Web site: [www.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.nichd.nih.gov)

*Back to Sleep* campaign sponsors include:  
 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
 Maternal and Child Health Bureau  
 American Academy of Pediatrics • SIDS Alliance  
 Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs



National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
 NIH Pub. No. 02-7040  
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 National Institutes of Health



# What is SIDS?

SIDS stands for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. It is the sudden and unexplained death of a baby under 1 year of age.

Because many SIDS babies are found in their cribs, some people call SIDS “crib death.” But, cribs do not cause SIDS.

## Facts About SIDS

Doctors and nurses do not know what causes SIDS, but they do know:



**SIDS is the leading cause of death in babies after 1 month of age to 1 year of age.**



**Most SIDS deaths happen in babies under 6 months old.**



**Babies placed to sleep on their stomachs are much more likely to die of SIDS than babies placed on their backs to sleep.**



**Babies are more likely to die of SIDS if they are placed to sleep on top of soft bedding or if they are covered by soft bedding**



**African American babies are 2 times more likely to die of SIDS than white babies.**



**American Indian babies are almost 3 times more likely to die of SIDS than white babies.**

Even though there is no way to know which babies might die of SIDS, there are some things that you can do to make your baby safer.



**Always place your baby on his or her Back to Sleep.**

## What Can I Do to Help Lower the Risk of SIDS?



**Always place your baby on his or her *Back to Sleep*, even for naps.**

This is the safest sleep position for a healthy baby to reduce the risk of SIDS.



**Place your baby on a firm mattress, such as in a safety-approved crib.\***

Research has shown that placing a baby to sleep on soft mattresses, sofas, sofa cushions, waterbeds, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces greatly increases the risk of SIDS.

\*For more information on crib safety guidelines, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or visit their web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).



**Remove soft, fluffy and loose bedding and stuffed toys from your baby's sleep area.**

Make sure you keep all pillows, quilts, stuffed toys, and other soft items away from your baby's sleep area.



**Make sure everyone who cares for your baby knows to place your baby on his or her back to sleep and about the dangers of soft bedding.**

Talk to childcare providers, grandparents, babysitters and all caregivers about SIDS risk. Remember, every sleep time counts. So, for the least risk, remind every caregiver to place your baby on his or her back to sleep on firm bedding at both nighttime and naptime.



**Make sure your baby's face and head stay uncovered during sleep.**

Keep blankets and other coverings away from your baby's mouth and nose. The best way to do this is to dress your baby in sleep clothing so you will not have to use any other covering over the baby. If you do use a blanket or another covering, make sure that the baby's feet are at the bottom of the crib, the blanket is no higher than the baby's chest, and the blanket is tucked in around the bottom of the crib mattress.



**Do not allow smoking around your baby.**

Don't smoke before or after the birth of your baby and make sure no one smokes around your baby.



**Don't let your baby get too warm during sleep.**

Keep your baby warm during sleep, but not too warm. Your baby's room should be at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult. Too many layers of clothing or blankets can overheat your baby.

## Babies Sleep Safest on Their Backs.

One of the easiest ways to lower the risk of SIDS is to put your baby on his or her **Back to Sleep**, even for naps. Until a few several years ago, doctors told mothers to place babies on their stomachs to sleep. Research now shows that fewer babies die of SIDS when they sleep on their backs.



**If you use a blanket, place the baby with his or her feet at the foot of the crib. The blanket should reach no higher than the baby's chest and the ends of the blanket should be tucked under the crib mattress.**