

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

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This article will explain what Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is and how we together can reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome among those in our community and especially among those we love and care for.

What is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is often referred to as SIDS and refers to a sudden death of an infant that is unexplained by history or examination, and even after autopsy, the reason for the death is still unknown. SIDS accounts for more deaths than any other cause in infants from 1 month to 1 year of age. Each year in the U.S. 3,000 infants die from SIDS.

SIDS Risk Factors and Facts

- Most SIDS deaths occur in babies who are between 2 and 4 months olds.
- More SIDS deaths occur in colder months. This may be due to babies being overheated when sleeping in a too warm temperature.
- Babies sleeping on their abdomens are much more likely to die of SIDS, than babies sleeping on their backs.

Other risk factors include:

- Lack of adequate prenatal care
- Exposure to smoking
- Babies with low birth weights
- Boys are more at risk than girls
- "Unsafe" sleep environment

Here are six ways that you and others who care for babies can reduce the risks of SIDS:

- 1. Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night.**
- 2. Place your baby on firm sleep surface, such as on a crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet.** Never place your baby to sleep on pillows, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces.
- 3. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area.**
- 4. Do not allow smoking around your baby.**
- 5. Keep your baby's sleep area close to, but *separate from* where you and others sleep.**
- 6. Do not let your baby overheat during sleep.**

Many of us were taught to place a baby to sleep on its abdomen so that it wouldn't choke. Nurses also were taught that; and it turns out to be wrong! Prior to these recommendations being made 5,000 babies died from SIDS every year. Now that number is below 3,000. This decrease is primarily from changing the sleeping position of the baby from its front to its back. Please know that babies either swallow or cough up fluid that enters their airway. Doctors have found no increase in choking or other problems in babies who sleep on their backs; in fact, more babies will choke sleeping on their abdomen.

Please share this information with anyone you know who has a newborn, or cares for a newborn; whether you are a teacher, store clerk, computer operator, Grandma, Nana, Opa, welder, car salesman, mechanic, work in Dept. of Corrections, parent, or retired. You or someone you know can benefit from this information. Babies are counting on us to care for them and do everything we can to protect and promote their safety and good health.

May the Lord of Life continue to bless our families with wholeness and peace, and may we all find comfort in our Savior who says "Let the little children come to me...for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14)