Safe to Sleep

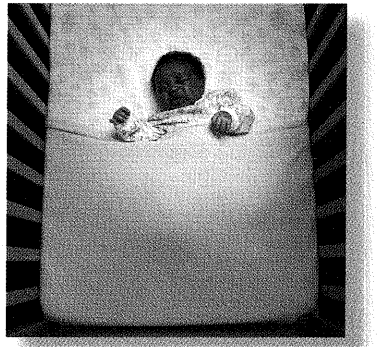
Is your baby safe while sleeping?

The Jefferson County Child Fatality Review Team has identified a disturbing number of unexpected deaths of infants (birth to 12 months of age). Most of these babies (over 90 percent) were sleeping in unsafe surroundings or sleeping with other people, including their parents or siblings. To help keep infants safe, the Jefferson County Child Fatality Review Team recommends the following **"Safe to Sleep" practices:**

1. **Place your baby to bed alone, on a firm mattress, in a safety-approved crib.** Make sure the mattress fits snuggly in the crib frame and that the crib slats are no more than 2 3/8 inches apart. Do NOT use bumper pads, pillows, comforters or stuffed toys in the baby's crib. These items could trap or smother the baby. Infants should not sleep on waterbeds, sofas, chairs, sheepskins, beanbags or other unstable surfaces. Babies may suffocate if they become wedged between the cushions of a sofa or chair, or caught between the bed frame and the mattress or wall.

2. **Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, even for naps, unless your doctor tells you differently.** This is the safest sleep position for a healthy baby and reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Infants who fall asleep on their stomachs should be gently turned onto their backs.

3. **Make sure everyone who cares for your baby knows to place your baby on his or her back when it is time to sleep.** Talk to child-care providers, grandparents, babysitters and all caregivers about the risks of an unsafe sleeping environment and



4. **Make sure your baby's face and head stay uncovered while sleeping.** Keep blankets and other coverings away from your baby's mouth and nose. Dressing your baby in warm one-piece clothing may help reduce the need for using covers during sleep time. Use sleep clothing that does not have strings or ties. If you use a blanket or other covering, make sure 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. It is recommended that room temperature be set between 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit.

5. **Take special care when you are overly tired.** Overtiredness may cause you to fall asleep while holding or breastfeeding your baby. The baby could slip beneath you and down into the chair, sofa or bed frame. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers who breastfeed their babies in bed should take care regarding such practices. Consider placing the baby's crib near your bed to allow for more convenient breastfeeding, parent contact, and for the return of the baby to the crib after feeding as suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

6. **Over-the-counter medications, certain prescription medications, alcohol or illegal drugs can make you less aware of the needs of your baby and his or her sleeping environment.** If you are on prescription medication, it is advised that you observe warnings and follow directions for taking the medication to avoid an injury to you and/or your baby. If you have any questions about the effects of your prescription medication, contact your doctor or pharmacist.

7. **Do not allow smoking around your baby.** Make sure no one smokes around your baby. Don't smoke before or after the birth of your baby. Exposure to cigarette smoke more than doubles the risk of SIDS.

Commonly asked questions about infant sleep practices

Will my baby get "flat spots" on his or her head from back sleeping?

Maybe. 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 and someone is watching, is one way to reduce flat spots. If you think your baby has a problem, talk to your doctor or nurse.

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

Yes. Place your baby on his or her stomach for "tummy time," when he or she is awake and someone is watching. "Tummy time" helps your baby's neck and shoulder muscles develop.

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

No. Most babies normally cough up or swallow fluids. If your baby has problems spitting up, talk to your doctor or nurse.

How can I get more information about safe sleeping practices?

Call **(502) 629-KIDS** or **(800) 852-1770** to request additional information about safe sleeping practices for infants. For general child safety information, visit Children's Health at NortonHealthcare.com.

Safe to Sleep Committee

Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Children's Hospital Foundation Office of Child Advocacy of Kosair Children's Hospital

Community Collaboration for Children

Community Partnership for Protecting Children

Crimes Against Children, Louisville Metro Police Department

Department for Community Based Services

Family Health Centers, Inc.

Healthy Start, Louisville Metro Health Department

Jefferson County Citizens Review Panel

Jefferson County Neighborhood Places

Louisville and Jefferson County SAFE KIDS Coalition

Louisville Metro Office of Youth Development

Metro United Way Success By 6

Office of Chief Medical Examiner

Office of Minority Health, Louisville Metro Health Department

Park DuValle Community Health Center

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky

SIDS/Other Infant Deaths Network of Kentucky

University of Louisville, Clinical Forensics

Cabinet for Health and Family Services

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