



Safe Sleeping for Babies

In the early weeks of life, babies sleep for about 16 hours a day. Planning where your baby can sleep safely is important.

Creating a safe sleeping environment for your baby will reduce the risk of injuries and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). For more information, see HealthLink BC File #46 [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\)](#).

Share this information with anyone who may take care of your baby; it is important for all parents, babysitters and caregivers to be informed about safe sleeping practices for babies. For safe sleeping resource for parents and caregivers see *Every Sleep Counts!* at http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2011/Every_sleep_counts_poster.pdf.

What can I do to keep my baby safe during sleep?

Put your baby to sleep on his or her back on the firm and flat surface of a safety-approved crib.

Babies should always be placed on their backs to sleep. Healthy babies and newborns do not choke or have any problems from sleeping on their backs.

When your baby can roll over on his own from his back to stomach, usually at 5-7 months of age, there is no need to continue to place him on his back if he turns over in his sleep.

Dress your baby in a sleeper and light blanket for sleep and keep the room cool. Never cover your baby's face or head with blankets.

Do not use items that prop the baby in one position during sleep. If your baby has a health condition that requires a different position for sleep, discuss safe options to meet your baby's needs with your doctor.

When a baby is awake, some 'tummy time' lying on his or her stomach is needed for healthy development. This also prevents temporary flat spots that may develop on the back of a baby's head.

Never let a baby sleep on a soft mattress or surface, couch, air mattress, pillow, duvet or quilt, or waterbed.

Do not leave your baby sleeping in a car seat, stroller, baby swing, or bouncer seat if you are not staying near and watching your baby. These are not safe sleeping places.

Put your baby to sleep in a safety-approved crib.

Babies should always sleep in a crib made after 1986 that meets the federal government's Cribs, Cradles and Bassinets Regulations. Visit the Baby's Best Chance website for regulations at www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/pregnancy/preparing-for-babys-arrival/baby-safety/index.html

Put the crib together using the manufacturer's instructions, and do not change the crib in any way.

To prevent a baby from being trapped or smothered, check and be sure:

- The crib mattress fits the frame. There should be no gaps bigger than 3 cm between the mattress and frame when the mattress pushes into the corners of the crib.
- The crib bars are less than 6 cm apart.
- There are no knobs or items on a crib that could catch a baby's clothing. If a baby tries to climb out of a crib and catches his or her clothing, the baby could strangle.

Do not place items in or around your baby's crib.

- Keep stuffed toys and pillows out of the crib.

- Do not use crib bumper pads or lambskin.
- Be sure there are no straps, cords or window blinds near the baby's crib.

It is best to not share a bed with your baby.

The safest place for your baby to sleep is on his/her back, in a safety approved crib beside your bed. Babies should always sleep in a crib until there is a possibility that the child could climb out on their own.

Bed-sharing is a common practice for many families, and many people around the world believe that it is natural to sleep with young infants. However, babies who share a bed with adults, other children or pets are at risk of being smothered.

Bed-sharing is especially unsafe if the parent is very tired, or under the effects of medications or alcohol, or overweight. The risk of injuries or SIDS is greater for the baby when sharing a bed with a person who may smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs, which can make them less responsive. Injuries from bed-sharing are preventable.

Share a room with your baby

Sharing a room helps protect your baby against SIDS. Babies who share a room with parents and sleep in their own cribs are safer than when they share a bed.

You can help protect your baby by sharing a room or sleeping close to your baby, within arm's reach but not on the same bed or sleeping surface. For example, your baby's crib can be placed beside your bed.

Breastfeed your baby

Breastfeed your baby, as this protects against SIDS. If you bring your baby into bed to breastfeed, it is best to place your baby back in his/her crib after breastfeeding.

Do not smoke around your baby.

Smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risk of SIDS. You should not share a bed with your baby if your baby is exposed to second-hand smoke.

Do not use alcohol or drugs

The use of certain drugs or substances during and after pregnancy is strongly discouraged. This includes alcohol, marijuana, crack, cocaine, heroin, and others. Evidence suggests that the use of these substances may increase the risk of SIDS.

If you or your partner needs support to stop using alcohol or drugs, call your local public health unit to find out about services in your area. You can also call the Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service: in Greater Vancouver call 604-660-9383, and in B.C. call toll-free 1-800-663-1441.

For more information, speak with your public health nurse or doctor. You can also ask for a copy of Baby's Best Chance or visit the website at www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2010/bbc.pdf.

Speak with your doctor or public health nurse if you or your partner need help to quit smoking. You can also call the QuitNow helpline toll-free in B.C. by dialing 8-1-1 or visit www.quitnow.ca.

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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