

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 on SIDS, see [HealthLinkBC 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 a safe sleeping resource for parents and caregivers see Every Sleep Counts! at www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2011/Every_sleep_counts_resource_web.pdf (PDF 1.04MB).

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

Put your baby to sleep on his or her back every time (at night and for naps).

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 or her own from back to stomach, usually at 5 to 7 months of age, there is no need return your baby to his or her back if your baby turns over in sleep.

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 health care provider.

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.

Place your baby on a firm surface that is free of hazards.

Use a crib, cradle, or bassinet that has a firm mattress, a tight-fitting sheet and no bumper pads, pillows, heavy blankets or toys. Ensure the crib, cradle or bassinet meets Canadian safety regulations.

For more information about Canadian safety regulations and to check for product recalls, visit Health Canada Consumer Product Safety at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety.html.

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

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

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

- The crib mattress fits the frame and is no thicker than 15 cm. 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.
- There are no straps, cords or window blinds near the baby's crib.

Some babies fall asleep while travelling in a car seat. Take your baby out of the car seat once you

have reached your destination. Babies should not be left to sleep in a car seat, a stroller, baby swing, or bouncer seat because their airway may become restricted.

Do not smoke around your baby.

Smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risk of SIDS.

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

The safest place for your baby to sleep is on his or 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. 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 accidental death or SIDS.

Bed-sharing is especially unsafe if the parent is very tired, under the effects of medications or alcohol, or overweight. The risk of accidental death or SIDS is greater for the baby when sharing a bed with a person who smokes, drinks alcohol, or use drugs which can make them less responsive. Accidental death from bed-sharing is 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 or her crib for sleeping.

For more information about breastfeeding, see [HealthLinkBC File #70 Breastfeeding](#).

Keep your baby warm but not hot.

The temperature of the room should be comfortable for an adult. A sleep sack, blanket-weight sleeper, or light blanket should be all that is needed to keep your baby warm. Do not swaddle your baby and do not use hats or toques indoors.

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 accidental death and 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 604-660-9382, and in other areas of B.C. call toll-free 1-800-663-1441.

Speak with your health care provider or pharmacist if you or your partner need help to quit smoking. You can sign up for the BC Smoking Cessation program at your local pharmacy. You can also call the QuitNow helpline toll-free in B.C. by dialing 604-731-5864 (LUNG) or 1-877-455-2233 or visit www.quitnow.ca.

For More Information

For more information, speak with your health care provider or visit Healthy Families BC at www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/parenting.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles 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.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.