

Paediatric Department

# Safe sleeping guide for babies under 1 year old

Our safer sleeping guide gives you clear evidence-based advice on safe baby sleep practices.

Ensuring your baby sleeps safely will significantly reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also called 'cot death'.

Cot deaths are fortunately very rare nowadays, partly because following the advice below helps to keep babies safer.

This advice should be followed day or night when your baby is sleeping.

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## Always place your baby on their back to sleep

Evidence from international studies shows that sleeping your baby on their back at the beginning of every sleep or nap (day and night) significantly reduces the risk of SIDS.

Once your baby can roll from their back to their front and back again, they will be able to find their own sleeping position. You do not need to turn your baby once they can roll.

The advice below should be followed whenever your baby goes to sleep – day or night.

## Do's and don'ts when putting your baby down for a sleep

**Your baby should sleep in a cot or Moses basket. They should sleep in the same room as you for their first 6 months of life.**

Evidence suggests that following this advice reduces the risk of SIDS significantly.

### Do

- ✓ If you feel tired put your baby down safely in their cot or Moses basket first
- ✓ Position your baby so that their feet are touching the end of their cot, Moses basket or pram
- ✓ Use a mattress that's in good condition
- ✓ Ensure the temperature of the room is not too hot or too cold. Ideal temperature is 16-20°C.

Please read this fact sheet from the Lullaby Trust for information about how to ensure your baby sleeps at the right temperature <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/factsheet-temperature.pdf>

### **Don't**

- × Don't sleep with your baby on a sofa or in an armchair.
- × Don't let your baby sleep in the same bed as you (however tempting)
- × Don't cover your baby with a blanket higher than their shoulders.

## **Keep your baby's cot clear**

Babies are at higher risk of SIDS if their heads could accidentally become covered. It is therefore recommend that cots or Moses baskets are kept as clear as possible.

### **Don't put any of these items in your baby's cot or Moses basket**

- × duvets/pillows
- × cot bumpers
- × soft toys
- × loose bedding
- × products such as baby sleep positioning systems - wedges, straps, baby nests or pods that will keep your baby in one sleeping position.

## If you do choose to co-sleep, follow these safety rules

Some families may wish to bed share or 'co sleep' with their baby. Here is some advice on how to make this safer

### Do

- ✓ Keep pillows, sheets, blankets and any other loose bedding away from your baby.
- ✓ Follow all other safer sleep advice to reduce the risk of SIDS such as making sure that you sleep your baby on their back
- ✓ Make sure your baby won't fall out of bed or get trapped between the mattress and the wall
- ✓ Avoid other children or pets being in the same bed as your baby.

### Don't sleep in the same bed as your baby if

- × You or your partner smokes, even if you do not smoke in the bedroom or house
- × You or your partner have drunk alcohol or taken drugs. This includes any medications that may make you drowsy
- × You are extremely tired
- × Your baby was born prematurely (37 weeks or less)
- × Your baby was born at a low weight (2.5kg or 5½ lbs or less).

## Keep your baby in a smoke-free environment

Smoking cigarettes during pregnancy or after birth can significantly increase the chance of SIDS for your baby. Your baby can be affected by you smoking, or by being exposed to second-hand smoke.

There is currently no research about e- cigarettes and SIDS, but using an e- cigarette seems to be much safer than continuing to smoke; both in pregnancy and once your baby is born. As there is no research on this we would suggest that you:

### Do

- ✓ Quit smoking – the safest option is to give up smoking completely. For more information speak to your GP or visit this website [NHS stop smoking services help you quit – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/stop-smoking)

### Don't

- × Don't share a bed with your baby if you use e- cigarettes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom or house)

## Use a mattress and bedding in good condition

- ✓ Use a firm and flat mattress that is protected by a waterproof cover. This will help keep the mattress clean and dry if there are any accidents!
- ✓ Wash the waterproof cover and ensure it is clean and dry before making up with bedding.
- ✓ Make sure the baby's mattress is clean, not stained and not fraying round the edges. It should fit the Moses basket or cot properly, not leaving any gaps round the sides.

- ✓ Where possible, use a new mattress for each baby, but if this is not possible, make sure any second-hand mattress is in good condition.
- ✓ For more advice on choosing a mattress for your baby see this link to The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)  
<https://www.rospa.com/resources/hubs/keeping-kids-safe/bedtime>

## Breastfeed your baby, if possible

Breastfeeding, even for a short time can give extra protection for your baby. Part breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding have been shown to be associated with a lower SIDS rate.

### Do

- ✓ Breast feed if you can and ask for help if you feel you need it. You can contact your midwife or health visitor or call the National Breastfeeding helpline 0300 100 0212.

## Get the room temperature right for your baby

### Do

- ✓ Aim for a room temperature of between 16-20°C with light bedding or a lightweight sleeping bag. This is comfortable and safe for sleeping babies.
- ✓ Use a room thermometer to help you monitor the temperature of the room.
- ✓ Check your baby is not too hot by feeling their chest or the back of their neck.
- ✓ If their skin is hot or sweaty remove one or more layers of bedclothes or bedding.

## Swaddle safely

If you decide to swaddle your baby, the following guidance should be followed to ensure baby is safe.

### Do

- ✓ Use thin materials, such as cotton
- ✓ Check the baby's temperature to ensure they do not get too hot.

### Don't

- × Swaddle above the shoulders
- × Never put a swaddled baby to sleep on their front
- × Do not swaddle too tight.

## Use slings and baby-carriers safely

Slings and baby-carriers can be useful for holding a baby hands-free, but they must always be used safely. The safest way to use a baby carrier is to ensure the baby is secure, in an upright position with their face in view at all times.(facing the person carrying them).

When wearing a sling or baby carrier, The Lullaby Trust advises to keep in mind the TICKS guidelines

- ✓ Tight
- ✓ In view at all times
- ✓ Close enough to kiss
- ✓ Keep chin off the chest
- ✓ Supported back.

## For more information

### Lullaby Trust

Provides safer sleep for babies, support for families

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/>

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Easy-read-card-English-web.pdf>

Safer Sleep for babies video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NO2vbtjNk2c>

Information & advice line 020 8802 6869

### The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

<https://www.rospa.com/home-safety/advice/product/baby-slings>



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