



Safer sleep for baby



6 steps to safer sleeping

Welcome to 'safer sleep for baby'

This booklet has been put together to help you keep your baby safe as they sleep. Having the right information and understanding the risks can help you to do this.

Each year around 200 babies will die unexpectedly before their first birthday. Many of these deaths are classified as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or cot death, which usually happens when babies are sleeping.

No-one wants to think about this happening to their baby and we don't want you to spend this special time worrying.

You can follow our 6 steps whenever you put your baby down to sleep to reduce the risks.

We know that every baby is different and if you have any questions or worries please speak to your midwife or health visitor.

We hope you find the booklet useful, here's to safer sleep for baby and sweeter dreams for you!

SIDS claims the lives of approximately 200 babies every year in the UK ~ around 4 babies per week.





Follow our **Six** steps

1

Keep baby away from smoke, before and after birth.

2

Put baby in a cot, crib or Moses basket to sleep - never fall asleep with them on a sofa or chair.

3

Never fall asleep with baby after drinking or taking drugs/ medication.

4

Put baby to sleep on their back with their feet to the foot of the cot.

5

Keep baby's head and face uncovered and make sure they don't get too hot.

6

Breastfeed your baby - support is available if you need it.

Babies should sleep in the same room as the adult who is caring for them for the first six months of life during the day and night.

Together we can reduce the number of babies dying unexpectedly in Cumbria each year.

Visit www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk for more information.



Smoking

Stopping smoking, during pregnancy and after you have had your baby, is one of the most positive and rewarding achievements you can make to improve the long term health for you and your baby. The key to giving up for good is to get support from your family, friends and professionals. You may have a specialist stop smoking service in your area that will be able to inform, advise and support you.

It is important that you do not share a bed with your baby if either parent is a smoker, even if you don't smoke in the bedroom.

Babies who are exposed to smoke before or after birth are at a much greater risk of developing respiratory problems and infections. Second hand tobacco smoke is very harmful to you and your baby, it contains over 4,000 chemicals. Smoke can linger in the air for 2 to 3 hours after you've finished a cigarette, even with a window open.

For more information on quitting smoking ask your midwife, GP or pharmacy team or search NHS Smokefree.

Over a third of SIDS deaths could be avoided if women didn't smoke during their pregnancy.

Keep your baby away from smoke in your home, car & while out and about.



E-Cigarettes

E-cigarettes aren't risk free, more research is needed over a longer period of time to know what the long-term effects may be but they are less harmful than smoking. If using an e-cigarette helps you stay smoke free, current research suggests it is safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke.

Remember: keep e-cigarettes and e-liquids out of the reach of children to avoid accidental poisoning and always use the correct charger.

Temperature

Keep baby's head and face uncovered and make sure they don't get too hot. Research has shown that overheating arising from excessive insulation (overwrapping), or high room temperature, or both, is associated with an increased risk of sudden unexpected death in babies.

What should my baby sleep in?

Over-heating can increase the risk of your baby dying. The room they sleep in should be between 16-20°C. Use a thermometer to check the temperature. If it's too hot you can turn down the heating or open the window.

To check if your baby is too warm, the best place to feel is on their chest, with the back of your hand. Don't worry if baby's hands or feet feel cool, this is normal. If they are too warm remove a layer of bedding and/or clothing. If using a sleep bag remove your baby's clothes and make sure you continue to fit the sleep bag according to safety instructions.

What should my baby wear?

It will depend on

- Your baby.
- The temperature of the room.
- What bedding you choose for your baby.
- The time of year.

Babies should not wear hats for sleep during the day or night as this can increase the risk of SIDS by more than three times.

Baby's bedding

- Use sheets, cellular blankets or a correctly fitted sleep bag.
- Use no more than 6 layers, this includes the vest and baby grow.
- Baby sleep bags come in various togs and each one should have a label that says when it is best to use it as a guide.
- Don't use pillows and duvets (under 12 months) as they increase the risk of suffocation and overheating. **Pillow use alone has been shown to increase the chance of death occurring by 2.5 times.**

Remember! If you fold a blanket or sheet this should be counted as a double layer.



Where does your baby sleep?

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot, crib or Moses basket in a room with baby's carer for at least the first six months. This applies to every sleep, including daytime naps, not just during the night.

The sleep space should be clear of objects, on a firm flat surface on a clean waterproof mattress with no rips, tears or perforations.

There is no evidence to support the safety of sleep pods and sleep positioners.

A safe sleep surface is a clear, flat firm mattress which is free from cot bumpers, toys, duvets, pets and older siblings. Make sure your baby can't fall off the mattress, or get trapped between the mattress and a wall or soft furnishing. Ensure the sleep space is free from anything that may cover your baby's face or become entangled around their neck.



NEVER sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby, this can increase the risk of death by 50 times.



Bed sharing

Some parents choose to sleep in a bed with their baby, perhaps to support breastfeeding, or to provide reassurance to baby.

Whatever the reason for bed sharing, there are some important things to remember:

- Keep baby free from pillows, loose sheets, blankets or any other items that could obstruct your baby's breathing or cause them to overheat. A high proportion of babies who die while sleeping are found with their head covered by loose bedding.
- Do not let pets or other children in the bed with baby.
- Make sure baby won't fall out of bed or get trapped between the mattress and the wall.
- Never leave a baby alone in the bed as they are at risk of falling out or wriggling into a dangerous position.

We recommend against the use of bed wedges, sleep positioners, nests or pods. Evidence shows that the safest way for your baby to sleep is on a firm mattress, in a clear cot, free of pillows, duvets or toys.

Always supervise baby.

It is important for you to know that there are some circumstances in which bed sharing with your baby can be very dangerous:

NEVER share a bed if either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom) as this increases the risk of your baby dying.

NEVER share a bed if either you or your partner has drunk alcohol or taken drugs (including medications that may make you drowsy) this can make you less responsive to a baby.

NEVER share a bed if you are extremely tired.

NEVER share a bed if your baby was born premature (37 weeks or less).

NEVER share a bed if your baby was born at a low weight (2.5kg or 5½ lbs or less).

You should never sleep together with your baby if any of the above points apply to you or your partner.



Alcohol & Drugs

Alcohol and substance use can influence a parent's decision and actions.

- Excessive sleepiness can be caused by the effects of alcohol or substances, including drugs or prescribed medication.
This means that you may go into a deeper sleep than you normally would, and are less likely to be aware of your baby lying next to you.
- Sleeping with your baby after drinking alcohol or using drugs can be hazardous and may increase the risk of your baby dying.
Never sleep with your baby when you or your partner have been drinking any alcohol.
- If you drink alcohol in the time before bed, you may fall into a deep sleep more quickly. If you share the bed, sofa or armchair with your baby after consuming alcohol, they are at a much higher risk of becoming trapped, suffocating or overheating.
Never put yourself in a situation where you may fall asleep with your baby on a bed, chair or sofa.
- Some drugs that are prescribed for you, or your partner, can cause you to become drowsy.
Never sleep with your baby if you or your partner have taken drugs that may cause drowsiness (legal or illegal).
- Some medications that are bought over the counter, can also make you sleepy. If you or your partner are unsure, ask your pharmacist or GP for advice.



If either you or your partner have drunk alcohol or taken drugs, including medications that may make you drowsy, NEVER share a bed with your baby. Overlay in these circumstances can lead to a criminal investigation

Twins and Multiple Births

We know from research, babies born prematurely or with a low birth weight, can be at a greater risk of SIDS.

Many parents find that putting their babies to sleep in the same cot (co-bedding) works well, at least for the first few weeks or months. When babies are able to roll over, they should be placed in individual cots to prevent either baby from obstructing the breathing of the other.

It is still important to follow the 6 steps to safer sleep guidance with multiple birth babies.

You should not co-bed in a Moses basket, due to increased risk of overheating and lack of space for the babies. Babies can be positioned 'side by side' or 'feet to foot' (at both ends, so babies will be head to head).

You must ensure they have space between them and do not use cot separators i.e. rolled blankets, towels or bolsters.

Carers of multiple birth babies can visit the Twins Trust (previously TAMBA) for more information.



Breastfeeding



Studies have consistently shown a lower risk of SIDS in breastfed infants.

Babies need nothing but breastmilk for the first six months of life; after that they should receive complementary foods with continued breastfeeding.

Studies have consistently shown a lower risk of SIDS in breastfed babies. Exclusive breastfeeding (i.e. those who have never fed with formula milk) is associated with the lowest risk, but breastfeeding of any duration may be beneficial for a lowered chance of SIDS compared to formula feeding alone.

Support for breastfeeding is available from your midwife, health visitor, or breastfeeding peer supporter, and you can also call the national breastfeeding helpline on **0300 100 0212**.

Worried about lack of sleep?

If you're tempted to give up breastfeeding because your baby is waking often in the night, remember that it won't last forever and you will sleep again. Babies who are formula fed also need care and attention during the night: babies have small stomachs and are growing very quickly so it is normal for them to wake in the night.

If you decide to bed-share so that you can breastfeed lying down, see the page on bed sharing for how you can do this as safely as possible.

It is also normal to feel tired and you need to take care of yourself.

Nap when baby sleeps and remember to keep hydrated and eat well.

Toddlers

The risk of SIDS once a child reaches 12 months is greatly reduced. However, your child's sleep environment should always be a safe space and free from harm and potential risks.

Your child's bed and bedding should be appropriate for the age and size of your child. Children would normally be transitioning to a bed around the age of 2 years.

Their bed should be positioned away from harms which may cause injuries, such as wiring or cords, which may cause strangulation, or heaters, which could overheat or burn a child.

'Safety' equipment should be used for the purpose it was made and safety gates should not be used once the child reaches 24 months.

Every piece of equipment should have the relevant BS Standard.

Cot mattress:

BSEN1877-10: 2011 & A1:2012
BS7177: 1996
and preferably, BSEN16890: 2017

All children and parents, are different. If you have any questions or concerns it is always best to speak to a professional who will be able to help you by listening to your individual situation.

Sleeping bags:

BS16781: 2018

Sleeping bags, when used correctly, may be safer to use than sheets and blankets, which can become loose, possibly covering baby's head.

Children will have a more restful sleep if they are in their own sleep space and not sharing with other children, pets or adults.

Their bed or cot should be kept free from toys, in particular, those that are battery operated.

As a guide the room temperature should continue to be between 16-20°C



If you have any questions or concerns please speak to your Midwife or Health Visitor.

Think twice tonight

Thinking about sharing a bed with
your baby tonight?

There are some circumstances when bed sharing
with your baby can be very dangerous



NEVER sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby;
this can increase the risk of death by 50%.

NEVER share a bed with your baby if...

- you or your partner smokes - even if you do not smoke in the bedroom
- you are extremely tired
- your baby was born at a low weight or prematurely
- you are taking medications that may make you drowsy
- you or your partner has drunk alcohol or taken drugs

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their own cot, crib or Moses basket.

If you need support or more information, speak to your midwife or health visitor.
Visit www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk for more information.

Information contained in this booklet is based on Safer Sleeping Guidance for Children, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool & Lancashire. © Lancashire County Council 2020.

Originally produced by Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool & Lancashire
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