

Safe sleep essentials for your baby



Highlights

Babies should always be placed on their back to sleep.

Use a firm, flat mattress without loose bedding or toys.

Avoid co-sleeping and maintain a smoke-free environment.

Room-sharing is safer than bed-sharing.

Swaddling and sleeping bags can help with safe sleep if used correctly.

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Why safe sleep matters from the start

Babies spend much of their day and night asleep. Providing a safe sleep environment is essential for reducing risks like SIDS. Since the 1990s, following expert guidance-like placing babies on their backs-has led to an 85% reduction in SIDS deaths.

What sudden unexplained death means for infants

SUDI includes SIDS and other fatal sleep accidents. These are deaths without a clear cause. SIDS used to be called "cot death." You can lower the risk by:

- Putting baby on their back to sleep.
- Keeping their face and head uncovered.
- Creating a smoke-free zone.
- Using a safe sleep space.
- Sharing a room \ (not a bed\) with baby.
- Breastfeeding if possible.

Why babies should sleep on their back

Back-sleeping babies are less likely to choke and more likely to keep airways clear. Sleeping on their side increases the risk of rolling onto the tummy.

What to do when baby starts to roll

Switch from bassinet to cot when baby shows rolling signs. Once baby can roll both ways, they can find their own sleeping position. Avoid using any positioners or pillows.

What unsafe sleep looks like

Unsafe practices include:

- Soft surfaces

Face coverings

Toys and bumpers in the cot

These increase risks of suffocation and overheating. Always use a firm, flat surface. Don't let baby sleep sitting or in inclined positions.

Understanding the risks of bed-sharing

Co-sleeping may seem natural but it increases SUDI risk in some cases. Avoid it if:

You're exhausted, unwell, or have used alcohol or drugs.

You or your partner smoke.

Your baby was born prematurely or is small for gestational age.

If you do co-sleep, follow safety measures:

Keep baby on their back.

Clear bedding and cover head.

Use a sleeping bag, not loose blankets.

Ensure a firm mattress and remove strangulation risks.

What safe sleep space means for your baby

Cots must meet safety standards. Avoid broken or outdated second-hand ones.

Room sharing (not bed-sharing) for at least 6 months lowers SUDI risk by up to 50%.

For bassinets:

Base must be wide and stable.

Sides should be 30cm above mattress.

Mattress must be firm, flat, and max 75mm thick.

Ensure good airflow.

Managing baby's sleep temperature safely

Babies regulate heat through their head and face. Dress baby as you would dress

yourself for the room temperature. Keep their head uncovered-even in cold weather.

What goes in the cot - and what doesn't

No soft toys, bumpers, doonas, or pillows.

Mattress should be firm and fit well.

Use light, secure bedding only.

A safe sleeping bag is better than loose blankets.

Using wraps and swaddles safely

Wrapping helps young babies sleep and stay on their back. After 3 months, or when baby rolls, stop wrapping and switch to a sleeping bag.

Sleeping bags and their role in sleep safety

Sleeping bags help:

Prevent face covering.

Delay risky rolling.

Promote back-sleeping.

Maintain stable temperature.

Choose a size-appropriate bag with no hood. Check the TOG rating to match room temperature.

Additional baby sleep safety tips

Never let baby sleep:

With heating devices like electric blankets.

Unattended on adult beds or couches.

On soft or inclined surfaces.

Near hanging cords or items.

Tools and Assistance

Always check that your baby's face and head remain uncovered during sleep.

Keep your baby's sleep environment smoke-free at all times.

Dress your baby appropriately for the room temperature - not too hot or too cold.

Stop swaddling once your baby starts showing signs of rolling.

Use a safe sleeping bag instead of loose blankets to help keep your baby warm and reduce risks.

Make sure any cot, bassinet, or sleeping space meets safety standards and is in good condition.

Avoid using pillows, positioners, or inclined sleepers, even if marketed for infants.

Regularly review your baby's sleep space as they grow and develop new abilities.