

SLEEP BABY SAFELY

KEY CAMPAIGN MESSAGING

OVERARCHING CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

- There are a million ways to raise babies, but only one way to lay them down to sleep safely. Protect babies from suffocation — every night, every nap, every time.
- Every other day, a healthy baby in Florida suffocates while sleeping unsafely. All of these deaths could have been prevented. Don't risk it! Protect babies from suffocation — every night, every nap, every time.

SAFE SLEEP TIPS

Follow Safe Sleep ABCs: ALONE, BACK, CRIB.

Always put babies to sleep alone on their back in an empty crib, bassinet, or Pack 'n Play. Remove all items from the crib (i.e., blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, and bumper pads) and use only a firm mattress and a tight-fitting sheet. Use a one-piece sleeper or sleep sack to keep baby warm, rather than loose blankets.

Share a Room, Not a Bed. Bring the crib into the parent's room for the baby's first year — room sharing keeps the baby close without the risks. Never put a baby to sleep on soft surfaces, such as adult beds, couches, futons, recliners, or air mattresses.

Stay Alert While Feeding. Set an alarm and always return the baby to its crib after feeding. Breastfeed if possible — it's best for the baby's protection. Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around a baby, and avoid the misuse of alcohol or drugs.

SAFE SLEEP FACTS

Suffocation from unsafe sleep is the No. 1 cause of preventable death for children under 18. As many children die from unsafe sleep suffocation before their first birthday as those who die in the next 17 years from all other preventable causes combined. In 2024, 184 babies in Florida suffocated while sleeping unsafely — that's about 10 kindergarten classrooms of children!

More infants die in adult beds than anywhere else.

Two-thirds of infant sleep-related deaths happened when parents shared a bed with their baby (co-sleeping). Infants are 40 times more likely to die in adult beds than in their own cribs. Other soft surfaces, including couches, futons, recliners, and air mattresses, also pose suffocation risks.

The cause of death is suffocation — not SIDS. The term SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) is not commonly used by medical examiners as a cause of death. SIDS denotes the cause of death is unknown. However, when a healthy baby dies a sleep-related death, we know the cause of death is frequently suffocation or overlay from co-sleeping. Knowing this fact, we can protect babies from suffocation by always practicing safe sleep.

The first year of a baby's life is critical. Sleep-related suffocation deaths generally happen in a baby's first year — most within the first eight months. At birth, babies have heavy heads and weak neck muscles; this makes it difficult for them to lift their heads to breathe freely if their airways are blocked. While babies develop differently, most can lift their heads at 4 months — and by 5 or 6 months, have mastered head control and can roll over in both directions due to stronger neck and arm muscles.

Sleeping babies on their back is safest. Some parents worry that babies will choke when on their back, but their airway anatomy and gag reflex prevent this. When babies sleep on their back, the trachea (windpipe) lies on top of the esophagus, so gravity stops spit-up from getting into the windpipe. Babies who sleep on their back are less likely to choke and less likely to have their airway (breathing) blocked.

What's comfy for adults can be deadly for babies.

Things that adults find comfy for sleeping — such as memory foam, pillow-top mattresses, down comforters, and pillows — can cause babies to suffocate. That's why we stress that you never sleep with your baby or lay them down to sleep on an adult bed or any other soft surface. We also stress keeping the baby's crib empty of blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, and bumper pads, using nothing but a firm mattress and a tight-fitting sheet.

We know more today than we ever have. As more information becomes available, we must learn from the past and change old practices and beliefs to keep babies safe while sleeping. We changed our habits about car seats; today they are proven lifesavers, and most parents wouldn't risk driving a baby without one — even if they've never had an accident. Using the same logic, let's make safe sleep for infants as common a safety practice as car seats.



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