

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

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What is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?

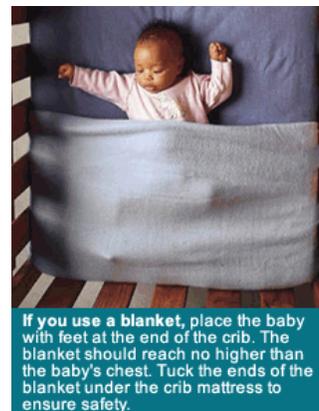
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is when a healthy baby less than one year old dies quickly in his sleep. SIDS can happen in any family. There is no warning, and doctors cannot find a reason for the baby's death.

A baby's death is called SIDS when it is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age, which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history.

SIDS is rare in babies less than one month old. Most babies who die of SIDS are between two and four months old. The risk of SIDS decreases as the baby nears one year of age.

What causes SIDS?

No one knows what causes SIDS. Many theories exist. Recent research points to a problem in the brain that affects the baby's ability to respond to breathing problems during sleep. No one knows the reasons why certain babies may have this problem.



How can I lower the risk of SIDS?

- Place your baby to sleep on his back every time, including naps. Make sure everyone who cares for your baby knows this. The risk of SIDS goes up when a baby who usually sleeps on his back is placed on his tummy for sleep.
- Use a firm crib mattress, covered by a well-fitted sheet.
- Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib. This includes pillows, quilts, sheepskins, and stuffed toys

- Dress your baby warmly enough to sleep without any covers.
- Keep your baby warm, but not hot. Do not bundle the baby in blankets and dress the baby in heavy clothes. The room temperature should feel comfortable to you.
- If a blanket is used, put the baby at the foot of the crib with his feet touching the end. Then tuck the blankets in around the mattress, reaching up only as far as the baby's chest.
- Share a room, not a bed. If you bring the baby into your bed for nursing or comforting, put the baby back in his own bed when you are ready to sleep.
- Do not bring the baby into your bed for feeding or comforting if you are very tired, using medications, or using drugs or alcohol.
- Do not let your baby share a bed with other children.
- Never sleep with your baby on a couch or a soft chair.
- Think about giving your baby a pacifier at naptime and bedtime. For unknown reasons, pacifier use during sleep seems to lessen the risk of SIDS. If you are breastfeeding, wait until the baby is one month old. Do not make the baby take the pacifier or put it back in the baby's mouth once he is asleep. Keep the pacifier clean, and do not coat it with anything sweet.
- Do not smoke during pregnancy.
- Do not let anyone smoke around your baby or anywhere your baby spends time, such as in the car.
- Put your baby on his tummy for "tummy time" when your baby is awake and you are watching. This helps prevent flat spots on the back of his head. Tummy time helps your baby develop muscles for lifting his head and chest.

Will my baby choke if he sleeps on his back?

No. Healthy babies automatically swallow or cough up fluids. There has been no increase in choking or other problems for babies who sleep on their backs.

Talk to all your baby's caregivers about safe sleeping.
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If your baby has a health problem, talk with your health care provider about the best sleep position for his special needs.

Where can I get more information?

- **SIDS Foundation of Washington/Northwest Infant Survival Alliance:** <http://nisa-sids.org> 1-800-553-0376 or 206-548-9290
- **WithinReach:** <http://www.withinreachwa.org> 1-800-322-2588
- **CJ Foundation for SIDS:** www.cjsids.com
- **National SIDS/Infant Death Resource Center (NSIDRC):** <http://www.sidscenter.org/>
- **American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;116/5/1245>

Contact [Bat-Sheva Stein](#) at the Washington State Department of Health at 360-236-3582.