



# Safe Sleep For Your Baby...

## Why should my baby be put on her back to sleep?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is less common in babies who sleep on their back. For the first year of life, put your baby to sleep on her back on a firm, flat surface. You do not need any special pillows or wedges to keep your baby on her back. Babies who sleep on their back are less likely to choke.

Older babies may be able to turn on their own from their back to their tummy. Always put your baby to sleep on her back. If she rolls over on her own, there is no need to reposition her.

## How else can I keep my baby safe while sleeping?

- Avoid soft mattresses, pillows, sleep positioners, comforters, stuffed toys, and bumper pads in your baby's crib - these can cause your baby to suffocate.
- Remove manufacturer's mattress wrapping to reduce the risk of SIDS and suffocation.
- Keep the crib away from lamps, plugs, blinds and curtains. Do not place soother cords, bibs, necklaces or similar items in or near a crib.
- Don't let your baby get too warm. To check if your baby is too warm touch the back of her neck and chest. If babies are asleep when taken indoors extra outdoor clothing should be removed.
- Consider dressing your baby in a sleeper to avoid the need for any covers over the baby, other than a thin blanket.
- Do not wear a hat or head covering on your baby during sleep.
- If others are caring for your baby make sure that the baby's sleep environment is similar to what they are used to. They shouldn't be left alone to sleep on an adult bed or couch.
- Keep pets out of the room.
- Keep environment smoke free at all times.
- Strollers, car seats, infant swings, bouncers and playpens are not made for babies to sleep in. If you are watching your baby closely, it is okay that they sleep in them for a little while. They should not sleep in them for a long time.



## What about room sharing?

Room sharing is a way to keep your baby close at night. Often parents have a crib or cradle in their bedroom. Health Canada states that the safest place for an infant to sleep is alone in a crib that meets current Canadian safety regulations. A cradle is also a safe alternative until the child can sit up on their own (usually by the time the child is 6 months of age). When your baby is an arm's length away, it is easier to listen for signs that she is stirring. Parents find that this can be an easy way to quickly meet baby's needs, with little disruption to the whole family especially for breastfed babies. Keeping your baby close may help you get to know your baby's cues, and recognize when she is hungry. It also helps to calm your baby if she is unsettled. Many babies sleep better when they are close to their mother or father.

## What safety precautions should I take if I choose to bring my baby to bed with me (bed sharing) ?

- Do not share a bed if you are ill or taking medication that might affect your ability to respond to your baby.
- Parents who smoke or drink alcohol should not share a bed.
- Your baby should be put on her back to sleep.
- Your baby will usually lie on her side to breastfeed. When your baby is done feeding she should be put on her **back to sleep** never on her front or side.
- The mattress should be firm, flat and clean. Do not put your baby to sleep on a waterbed.
- The bed should be large enough to safely share with your baby.
- Be sure that she cannot go under the covers or near your pillow.
- Ensure your baby has her own light bedding separate from your own. It is best to use sheets and light blankets rather than quilts or duvets.
- Your baby should not be allowed to get too warm. Do not overdress her. Bedroom temperatures should be between 16 and 18 degrees Celsius.
- Be sure that your baby cannot get stuck between the mattress and the wall or fall out of bed.
- Be sure that others do not share the bed with your baby (i.e. other children).
- Keep pets out of the room.



(Adapted from "Sharing a Bed with Your baby" - UNICEF Enterprises Ltd. )

### IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER IF BEDSHARING

You should not share a bed with your baby if you or any other person in the bed:

- Are a smoker (no matter where or when you smoke).
- Have consumed alcohol or drugs.
- Have taken any medication which could make you extra sleepy.
- Are unusually tired and find it difficult to respond to your baby's needs.

#### Also...

- Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or reclining chair.
- It is unsafe to let your baby sleep alone on an adult bed.
- Never let your baby sleep on a waterbed, bean bag chair, arm chair or a sagging mattress.

See also "How Your Baby Sleeps"

Adapted with permission from the Oxford County Board of Health 2005  
and Niagara Region Public Health 2007