

# Safe Sleep for Babies

In February 2020, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated their 2016 recommendations for a safe sleep environment for infants (birth to one year of age). While it is impossible to eliminate all risks, **the AAP has issued the following recommendations for healthy, full term babies.** *If your baby is premature, or has a special health need, please consult with your physician for additional guidance.*

- **Hold your baby skin-to-skin** for the first hour after birth.
- **Whenever you are not holding your baby and you need to sleep or take care of other needs, place your baby on their back on a flat, firm surface with no loose pillows, blankets, bedding, soft objects, or bumper pads.** Infants, especially if younger than four months of age, should not routinely sleep in car seats, strollers, swings, or baby carriers.
- **Breastfeeding decreases your baby's risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).** Your baby is most protected when you breastfeed exclusively (or feed pumped milk) for at least six months. While the protection of breastfeeding increases with exclusivity, ANY breastfeeding is shown to be more protective for SIDS than NO breastfeeding.
- **Have your baby sleep in your room**, close to your bed, but not in your bed, for at least the first six months, and ideally the first year.
- **If you bring your baby into your bed to feed or comfort**, return your baby to their own bed when you are ready to return to sleep. If you are drowsy and there is a possibility that you may fall asleep, do NOT feed your baby in a water bed, armchair, recliner, or sofa, and make sure there are no pillows, sheets, blankets or other items that could cover your baby's face, head or neck, or overheat your baby. **If you should fall asleep**, as soon as you wake up, move your baby to their own bed. *This is especially important if your baby is younger than four months of age.*
- **Do not bring your baby into a bed with multiple people**, or anyone who smokes or is using alcohol or illegal drugs.
- **The following situations increase the risk of bedsharing with your baby:**
  - Your baby is younger than four months old.
  - Your baby was born prematurely or low birth weight.
  - Any person in the bed is a smoker (even if they do not smoke in bed).
  - You smoked while you were pregnant.
  - You take any medications that may make it harder for you to wake up.
  - You are drinking any alcohol.
  - Your baby is bed sharing with anyone other than their parent.
  - The sleep surface is soft or has crevices or cracks: a waterbed, sofa, couch, armchair, recliner or sofa.

MilkWorks



## Community Breastfeeding Center

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(402) 502-0617

For additional  
information:  
[www.milkworks.org](http://www.milkworks.org)

- **Consider offering a pacifier at sleep times once breastfeeding is firmly established.** Do not tie or attach the pacifier to your baby or attach it to a stuffed animal.
- **Avoid maternal and infant exposure to smoke, alcohol and illegal drug use** during pregnancy and after your baby is born.
- Mothers should receive **regular prenatal care** and infants should receive **recommended immunizations**.
- **Avoid any commercial devices that are inconsistent with safe sleep recommendations.** Do not use home cardio-respiratory monitors as a strategy to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- **Give your baby tummy time when your baby is awake** and you can observe your baby. Tummy time avoids head flattening and promotes upper body strength.
- **Lay a swaddled baby ONLY on their back.** Swaddling should be snug around the chest, but looser around the hips and knees to allow ample room for your baby to move their legs. **Once your baby is rolling over to their stomach, do NOT swaddle your baby. Do NOT swaddle your baby if they are in bed with you.**

**Safe sleep measures are not meant to interfere with breastfeeding.** Breastfeeding improves the health of your baby and decreases your baby's risk of SIDS. MilkWorks encourages parents to understand the AAP safe sleep recommendation so that you and your baby can get the sleep that you need in a manner that is as safe as possible.

**For more detailed information on the AAP guidelines, visit:**

- <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/5/1030>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/A-Parents-Guide-to-Safe-Sleep.aspx>

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