

Is your Baby Sleeping Safely?



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You and your partner have endured nine months of pregnancy. You've chosen a name. You've purchased bibs, bottles and baby clothes. Now, have you given careful consideration as to where your baby will sleep?

Crib vs. bed

There is much controversy as to which sleeping surface is best for babies. Is it the crib or the parent's bed? The crib is believed to be safer, but the child may feel a sense of isolation from the mother. The adult bed allows more contact between the mother and the baby, but there have been reported safety issues associated with accidental suffocation and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

What is SIDS?

SIDS is a sudden and unexpected death of a baby due to an unknown cause. The occurrence of SIDS in the USA is 2 babies in every 1,000 live births (1 in 500). SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies aged two weeks to one year old. Some risk factors for SIDS include:

- Cold months,
- Lower socio-economic groups,
- Premature babies,
- Low birth weight babies,
- In babies experiencing severe episodes of apnea (not breathing) that require resuscitation,
- Siblings died of SIDS,
- Babies born to mothers who smoke during pregnancy, and
- Babies born to mothers who use recreational drugs.

Safe sleeping

A study was published in the journal *Pediatrics* on the incidence of SIDS in babies who slept in cribs, parents' beds and other surfaces (sofas, chairs). The researchers examined 1,396 cases of SIDS among infants 11 months of age or younger that were reported to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission from 1980-1983 and 1995-1998. The researchers found that the number of crib deaths decreased while the number of parent's bed and sofa or chair deaths increased. By a conservative estimate, the researchers concluded that the risk of SIDS increased twenty-fold when infants slept in their parent's bed rather than in cribs.

A good night's sleep

Many factors must be considered when parents decide where their baby will sleep, such as culture and lifestyle habits. Although the study above leans more toward crib sleeping versus bed sleeping, in the end the decision rests in the hands of the parents.