

Myths and Facts: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Safe Infant Sleep

Myth: Babies can “catch” SIDS.

Fact: A baby cannot catch SIDS. SIDS is not caused by an infection, so it can't be caught or spread.

Myth: Cribs cause “crib death” or SIDS.

Fact: Cribs themselves do not cause SIDS. But features of the sleep environment – such as a soft sleep surface – can increase the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death.

Myth: Babies who sleep on their back will choke if they spit up or vomit during sleep.

Fact: Babies will automatically cough up or swallow fluid they spit up or vomit – it's a reflex to keep the airway clear. Studies show no increase in the number of deaths from choking among babies who sleep on their backs. In fact, babies who sleep on their backs might clear these fluids better because of the way the body is built.

Myth: SIDS can be prevented.

Fact: There is no known way to prevent SIDS, but there are effective ways to reduce the risk of SIDS.

Myth: Shots, vaccines, immunizations, and medicines cause SIDS.

Fact: Recent evidence suggests that shots for vaccines may have a protective effect against SIDS. All babies should see their health care providers regularly for well-baby checkups and should get their shots on time as recommended by their health care provider.

Myth: SIDS can occur in babies at any age.

Fact: Babies are at risk for SIDS only until they are 1 year old. Most SIDS deaths occur when babies are between 1 month and 4 months of age. SIDS is not a health concern for babies older than 1 year of age.

Myth: If parents sleep with their babies in the same bed, they will hear any problems and be able to prevent them from happening.

Fact: Because SIDS occurs with no warning or symptoms, it is unlikely that any adult will hear a problem and prevent SIDS from occurring. Sleeping with a baby in an adult bed increases the risk of suffocation and other sleep-related causes of infant death.

Sleeping with a baby in an adult bed is even more dangerous when:

- The adult smokes cigarettes or has consumed alcohol or medication that causes drowsiness
- The baby shares a bed with other children
- The sleep surface is a couch, sofa, waterbed, or armchair
- There are pillows or blankets in the bed
- The baby is younger than 11 weeks to 14 weeks of age
- The baby shares a bed with more than one person, especially if sleeping between two adults

Instead of bed sharing, health care providers recommend **room sharing** – keeping your baby's sleep area in the same room where you sleep. Room sharing is known to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death.



National Institute of Child Health and Human Development,
Safe to Sleep®

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www.nichd.nih.gov/sts/about/pages/mythsfacts.aspx