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Safer Sleeping  
Guidance

## FOR PARENT & CHILD PLACEMENTS

### Introduction

This guidance will help you to care for your baby in ways that reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Such deaths are rare, but the Lullaby Trust reports that almost 200 babies still die every year.

The Lullaby Trust has good advice for parents to reduce the risk of SIDS and keep babies as safe as possible. They provide a series of free online presentations on how to reduce the risk of SIDS which you can view at: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/safer-sleep-for-babies-online-presentations/](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/safer-sleep-for-babies-online-presentations/).

# Safer Sleeping Practice

## –HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SIDS

### Key advice:

- **Put babies on their backs to sleep (“Back to Sleep”);**
- **Create a clear, flat, sleeping place for baby;**
- **Put baby to sleep in a separate cot, crib or Moses basket;**
- **Sleep in the same room as the baby for at least the first 6 months;**
- **Use a firm and flat mattress** that is protected by a waterproof cover;
- **Keep babies smoke free.**

All advice applies to both daytime and night-time sleep.

### Where should baby sleep?

Babies should sleep in the same room as their parent or caregiver (day and night) for the first six months. If your baby was born prematurely, this should be six months from their due date. If your baby was born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or had a low birth weight (under 2.5kgs), check with your Health Visitor before moving them to their own bedroom.

Once your baby is sleeping in a separate room, we recommend using a baby monitor.

Baby should have their own cot or Moses basket; they should not sleep with you in your bed as this is unsafe. Avoid falling asleep on the sofa with your baby as this is very high-risk.



## “Back to Sleep”

Babies should always be put to sleep on their back. The risk of SIDS is higher for babies who are placed on their front or side.

Once your baby can roll from their back to their front, and back again (on their own), you can leave them to find their own sleeping position. Until then, if you notice they have rolled on to their front, gently roll them back.

**If your baby was born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or had a low birth weight (under 2.5kgs)** they may have been put to sleep on their front **in hospital** for special medical reasons. When they come home, they should always sleep on their back to reduce the risk of sudden infant death.

When they are ready to go home these babies should always sleep on their back to reduce the risk of SIDS. They may find it hard to get used to a new sleeping position at first, but keep putting your baby on to their back and speak to your health visitor, neonatal outreach team or GP if you are worried about how they are coping with this.

## Baby's bed

Create a clear, flat sleeping place for your baby. A clear cot is a safe cot.

This means a cot or Moses basket without pillows, quilts, duvets, bumpers or other cot accessories.

Cot mobiles can be used with very young babies, but should be removed when baby is 4 months old (or earlier if they can touch it).

Choose a cot that conforms to **British Safety Standards** (this will be on the label). Also make sure that:

- There is at least 50cm between the top of the mattress, and the top of the cot sides. Do not lower the cot sides when baby is sleeping.
- Cot bars are no more than 6.5cm apart. This prevents baby from getting their arms, legs or head stuck between the bars.

Sleeping 'pods' or 'nests' and 'next to me' cribs are not recommended.

Babies should not sleep for long periods of time in a chair (including car seats and bouncing chairs/rockers).

Your baby needs a firm, flat mattress with no raised or soft sides. The mattress should fit the cot or Moses basket snugly. The mattress should have a waterproof cover. This will help keep the mattress clean and dry, as the cover can be wiped down.

Babies are at higher risk of SIDS if they have their heads covered, so it is safest to keep the cot clear of unnecessary items and place their feet near the foot of the cot.



**If you have twins or other multiples, you may choose to put them to bed together, in the same cot. If you wish to do this, please consider the following advice:**

- Only place them side by side in a cot in the early weeks, when they can't roll over onto each other. Make sure they are not close enough to touch and potentially obstruct each other's breathing.
- It might be good to start putting them at opposite ends of their cot from the beginning – in a 'feet to foot' position with their own bedding firmly tucked in, or in baby sleeping bags.
- Do not use rolled up towels, pillows or anything between their heads and do not use cot dividers.
- Once the babies can roll over, move them to their own separate cots.
- Don't put multiple babies in the same Moses basket as there is a risk of overheating.



## Sleepwear and bedding

Use lightweight bedding which is tucked in to avoid covering baby's face. Use either a suitable baby sleeping bag, or cotton sheets and blanket.

If you are using baby sleeping bags, ensure that they conform to British Standards (this will be on the label). Make sure it is the right size for your baby:

- Not too loose around the neck;
- Well-fitted on the shoulders;
- This will ensure that baby cannot slip down inside.

Do not use sleeping bags with hoods. Make sure fastenings are secure and covered by fabric.

Choose a sleeping bag that is suitable for the season. In summer, you will want 0.5-1 tog, and up to 2.5 tog in winter.

If you are using sleeping bags, this is all the bedding you need. Do not add sheets or blankets.

Swaddling babies is not advised due to the risk of overheating. The Lullaby Trust have some safety advice for parents who wish to swaddle their baby:

- Use thin materials;
- Do not swaddle above the shoulders;
- Never put a swaddled baby to sleep on their front;
- Do not swaddle too tight;
- Check the baby's temperature to make sure they do not get too hot;
- Stop swaddling when the baby shows signs of rolling;
- Never swaddle in hot weather.

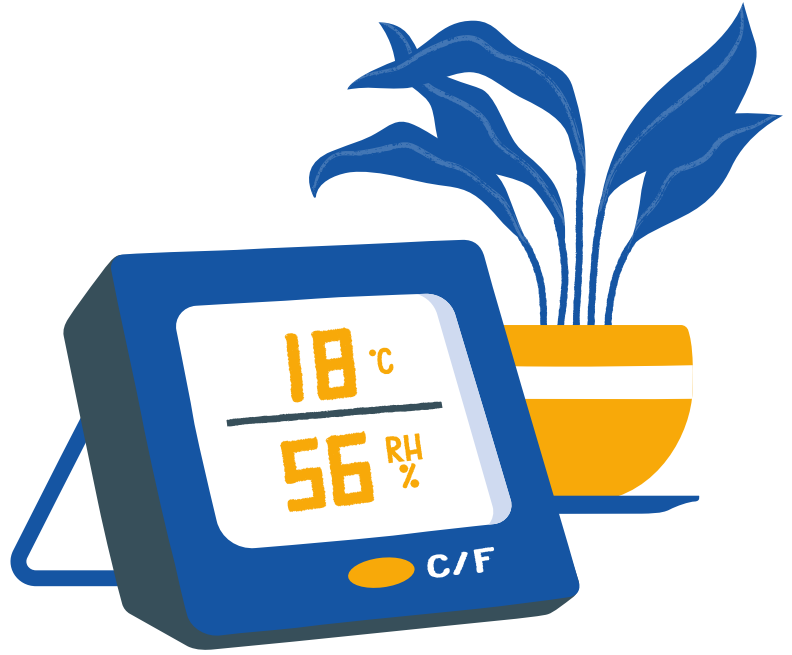
You can also get advice from your midwife/health visitor.

## Temperature

The Lullaby Trust advise that a room temperature of 16-20°C is ideal and safe for babies. We advise using a room thermometer.

Don't let your baby get too hot or cold:

- If your baby is sweating or their tummy feels hot to touch, take off some of their bedding. Don't worry if their hands or feet feel cool – this is normal.
- Use layers of lightweight blankets to make it easier to adjust the baby's temperature. A folded blanket counts as two blankets.
- Sometimes baby might only need one thin sheet.
- Baby sleeping bags are a good choice.
- Babies should never sleep with a hot water bottle or electric blanket.
- Do not put baby's cot next to a radiator or other heat source (including direct sunshine).
- Do not cover baby's head when they are indoors. They lose heat through their heads and it is important that they can do so.



## Smoking

Keep baby's environment smoke free. Exposure to cigarette smoke has been linked to SIDS.

Babies are at an increased risk of sudden infant death if:

- Their mother smoked during pregnancy;
- They are exposed to cigarette smoke;
- They spend time in rooms where people have smoked;
- They share a bed with a smoker (even if they don't smoke in bed).

## Sleeping away from home

### 1. Travel cots

Use the mattress provided. Do not add pillows or additional padding.

### 2. Slings and baby carriers

The safest baby carriers are those that keep baby in an upright position against your body. Choose one that allows you to see the baby and make sure their face isn't covered. Keep baby's chin off their chest to keep their airway open.

### 3. Car seats

Car seats need to be suited to the age and weight of the baby, and be fitted according to the manufacturer's instructions. Baby should preferably be in sight of an adult during the journey.

Make sure baby doesn't get too hot. Remove hats and outdoor coats in the car.

When you reach your destination, transfer baby to a flat surface. A flat pram is safer for a young baby than a car seat connected to a pram base.

Babies should not sleep in a car seat for more than 2 hours so you may need to stop on long journeys to get baby out and give them a chance to stretch and move around.

**Premature and low birth weight babies and babies under 4 weeks should avoid long car journeys of more than 30 minutes where possible.**

It is important to check on your baby regularly when they are asleep.



## As your baby grows

As your baby grows, they will begin to move around and explore their surroundings. Be careful of things that they could grab or climb:

- Do not position the cot under a window if they could climb on the window ledge;
- Remove cot mobiles that they could grab and pull down;
- Make sure there are no ribbons, cords, strings or electrical cables within their reach;
- Keep the drop sides of the cot fully up and locked;
- Use a bed guard when baby moves to a toddler bed to prevent them falling out;
- Keep the cot/bed free of toys that might be a choking hazard;
- Do not use bunk beds for toddlers or young children under 6 years;
- Secure furniture to the wall. Children often climb into wardrobes, or onto shelves and this can cause serious injury or death if the furniture falls;
- Do not use window blinds with looped cords as these are a strangulation risk for young children;
- Put hazardous items away, including medicines and nappy sacks. Nappy sacks are plastic bags and can be a suffocation risk.

Once baby is **over a year old**, you may wish to use a pillow and or duvet but they are not necessary.



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