

# Laying Your Baby Down to Sleep



Your newborn is growing quickly, which uses a lot of energy. As a result, your newborn baby may sleep for a total of about 16 to 17 hours a day (including naps). When your baby is 4 to 12 months, they may sleep for a total of about 12 to 16 hours a day (including naps). Chances are, your newborn will not sleep for long stretches. But there are no rules for when or how long a baby sleeps. These tips will help your baby fall asleep safely.

## Where should your baby sleep?

Where your baby sleeps depends on what's right for you and your family. Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind as you decide:

- A newborn baby may feel more secure in a bassinet than in a crib.
- Always use a firm, flat sleep surface for your baby. Don't use one that is at an angle or inclined. Make sure it meets current safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Don't use a car seat, carrier, swing, or similar places for your baby to sleep.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that babies sleep in the same room as their parents. The baby should be close to their parents' bed, but in a separate crib or bassinet. This is advised for at least the first 6 months.

## Helping your baby sleep safely

These tips are for a healthy baby up to the age of 1 year. Know the ABCs of safe baby sleep:

- **A** is for **Alone**. Put baby to sleep alone in their crib. Keep soft items such as toys, crib bumpers, and blankets out of the crib.
- **B** is for **Back**. Place your baby on their back to sleep. Do this both during naps and at night. Studies show this is the best way to reduce the risk for SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) or other sleep-related causes of infant death. Don't put a baby on their stomach to sleep.
- **C** if for **Crib**. Use a safe sleep surface. Babies should sleep on a firm, flat surface. Don't use one that is at an angle or inclined. Safe examples are a crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that follows the safety standards of the CPSC. Check the [CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) to make sure the product is not recalled. This is especially important for used cribs. Don't use broken cribs or cribs with missing instructions or missing parts. Many babies have died in cribs that were broken or had missing parts. The space between crib bars must be no more than 2-3/8 inches apart. This way, the baby can't get their head stuck between the bars.



Protect your baby with these safety tips:

- **Don't smoke or use nicotine around your baby.** Keep smoke of any kind away from your baby. No cigarettes, marijuana, or vaping in your home. Babies exposed to smoke have more colds and other diseases. Smoke of any kind increases a baby's risk of dying while sleeping, especially babies who are sick.
- **Don't share a bed with your baby.** This is extra important if your baby is very young or small or was born prematurely. This is also extra important if you have been drinking alcohol, used marijuana, or taken any medicines or illegal drugs. Don't put your baby to sleep in a bed with other children or adults. You can bring your baby to your bed for feedings and comforting. But return your baby to the crib or bassinet for sleep. Don't fall asleep with your baby. Bed sharing is also not advised for twins or other multiples.
- **Use correct bedding.** Your baby should sleep on a firm, flat mattress or firm surface with no slant. The mattress should fit tightly and be designed just for the crib. Cover the mattress with a fitted sheet. Don't use fluffy blankets or comforters. Don't let your baby sleep on an adult bed, waterbed, air mattress, sofa, sheepskin, pillow, or other soft material. Don't put soft toys, pillows, or bumper pads in the crib. Don't use weighted blankets, sleepers, swaddles, or other weighted items. Make sure nothing is covering your baby's head. These increase a baby's risk of suffocating.
- **Put your baby in other positions while they are awake.** This helps your baby grow stronger. It also helps prevent your baby from having a misshaped head. When your baby is awake, hold your baby. Give your baby time on their tummy while awake and supervised for short periods of time beginning soon after coming home from the hospital. Slowly increase tummy time to at least 15 to 30 minutes each day by 7 weeks old. Try not to let your baby sit in a seat or swing for long periods of time.
- **Don't use sitting devices for routine sleep.** Infant seats, car seats, strollers, infant carriers, and infant swings are not advised for routine sleep. These may lead to blockage of a baby's airway or suffocation. If your baby is in a sitting device, remove them from the device and put them in the crib or other appropriate surface as soon as is safe and practical.
- **Make sure your baby doesn't get overheated when sleeping.** Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for you and your baby. Dress your baby lightly. Instead of using blankets, keep your baby warm by dressing them in a sleep sack, or a wearable blanket. Don't use a hat on your baby indoors.
- **Use caution when swaddling your baby.** Swaddling doesn't reduce the risk for SIDS. If you choose to swaddle your baby, make sure they are on their back and the swaddle is not too tight. Stop swaddling your baby when they look like they're trying to roll over. Some babies start working on rolling as early as 2 months. The risk of suffocation is higher if your baby rolls to their stomach while they are swaddled.

- **Offer a pacifier (not attached to a string or a clip) to your baby at naptime and bedtime.** This helps reduce the risk for SIDS. Don't give the baby a pacifier until your baby is breastfeeding well.
- **Don't use products that claim to decrease the risk for SIDS.** This includes wedges, positioners, special mattresses, special sleep surfaces, or other products. These devices have not been shown to prevent SIDS. In rare cases, they have resulted in infant death. Cardiorespiratory monitors sold for home use are also not helpful in preventing SIDS.
- **Always place cribs, bassinets, and play yards in hazard-free areas.** Make sure there are no dangling cords, wires, or window coverings. This is to reduce the risk for strangulation. Place the crib away from windows.
- **Breastfeed your baby.** This can reduce the risk for SIDS. Give your baby only human milk for at least 6 months, unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise. Experts advise continuing to use human milk for 1 year or longer. This depends on if both you and your baby want to do this. Using human milk for a year or longer reduces the risk for SIDS and many other health problems.
- **Take your baby for checkups and vaccines.** If your baby seems sick, call your baby's healthcare provider. Take your baby in for regular well-baby checkups and routine shots. Some studies show that fully vaccinating your child lowers the risk for SIDS.
- **Don't use alcohol, marijuana, opioids, or illegal drugs.** There is an increased risk for SIDS with exposure to alcohol or illegal drug use. Using these substances affects your ability to care for your baby.

## Hints for getting your baby to sleep

You may not be able to schedule when or how long your baby sleeps. But you can help your baby go to sleep. Try these tips:

- Make sure your baby is fed, burped, and has spent quiet time in your arms before being laid down to sleep.
- Use soothing sensation, such as rocking or sucking on a thumb or hand sucking. Most babies like rhythmic motion.
- During the day, talk and play with your baby. This helps babies sleep for longer periods during the night.

## Safe sleep when your baby is sick

Babies with a recent or current illness, such as a respiratory infection, are at a higher risk for SIDS. Following safe sleep guidelines is even more important when your baby is sick. Do this even if they have symptoms like congestion, runny nose, coughing, or poor appetite. If you are concerned about your baby's health, contact your baby's healthcare provider right away.

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