

Parents' Questions about Safe Infant Sleep

Answers to questions not in the [AHS Safe Infant Sleep for Resources](#)

What should my baby wear?

1. **Hats are used in the hospital, yet the recommendations say to keep the head uncovered. Should my baby wear a hat indoors when I get home?**

Hats are used to keep a baby's temperature stable right after birth. When you are at home, and your room temperature is controlled, your baby won't need a hat as it might make him too hot.

Knitted hats can be used for keeping baby's head warm when outdoors in the winter or other cool days. A hat with a brim will keep the sun off your baby's delicate skin in the spring and summer.

2. **I want to keep my baby warm and safe when sleeping—what should he or she wear?**

A sleeper that fits well will work. Bibs, necklaces, items with ties or hoods, and hats should be taken off before putting your baby to sleep to prevent strangulation. If you use a blanket, choose a lightweight one (not a duvet or quilt). Tuck it under the end of the mattress so it reaches only up to the baby's chest.

3. **Can my baby use a sleep sack or wearable blanket?**

Sleep sacks and wearable blankets designed for safe sleep can **replace** a blanket. Your baby may get too hot if you use both a blanket and a sleep sack. Make sure the size is right. It's important that the sleep sack has the right size opening at the neck and arms so your baby won't slip down inside the bag.

What about swaddling and soothers?

4. **Is it safe for me to swaddle my baby or infant during sleep?**

Most babies do not require swaddling for sleep. It is safest for your baby to sleep without any blankets in the crib. If your baby is excessively fussy and you feel swaddling helps her to sleep follow these steps to make sure she is swaddled as safely as possible

- **Always** put your baby on his or her back when swaddled. **Never** put swaddled babies on their tummy or side.

- Use one light cotton blanket (such as a receiving blanket) and wrap your baby from the shoulders down. The swaddling blanket should never cover your baby's head.
- Wrap the blanket tight enough so it doesn't come loose, but not so tight that it squeezes the chest or keeps the legs from moving. You should be able to fit a finger between your baby and the blanket, like you can with a child safety seat harness.
- Watch your baby's temperature. A baby that is too hot is at more risk of SIDS. If your baby's skin feels very warm to the touch, or he or she is sweating, remove the swaddling blanket.
- Room temperature is appropriate if it is comfortable for adults wearing light clothing. Your baby should have no more than 1 layer of clothing more than what you are comfortably wearing.
- **Stop swaddling** when your baby begins to have strong purposeful movement and when the startle reflex is not as strong. This happens between 2-3 months. If you find your baby has wiggled out of the swaddle, even once, consider stopping swaddling at that time.
- To reduce the risk of an unstable or loose hip joint (hip dysplasia), let your baby's legs stay slightly bent and spread apart when swaddled.
- Watch the International Hip Dysplasia Institute's video at www.hipdysplasia.org/developmental-dysplasia-of-the-hip/hip-healthy-swaddling

5. Do pacifiers/soothers add any risk for my child related to sleep?

There are 2 things to think about here:

- If you are using a pacifier, there is no evidence that pacifiers increase the risk of SIDS. In fact, research shows that using a soother at bedtime to help babies calm and soothe themselves has been associated with a reduced incidence of SIDS.^(1,3,5) Don't worry about putting it back in your baby's mouth if it falls out while your baby is asleep. This is not necessary.
- The use of a pacifier may interfere with breastfeeding if started before breastfeeding is well established.⁽⁸⁾ An alternative for calming your infant at bed time is bringing your baby to the breast. Babies who suck at the breast to calm suck differently than the deep drawing sucks they use when feeding, so parents do not need to worry about 'overfeeding' their baby.

Where is it safe for my baby to sleep?

6. We weren't planning to room share? Should we?

Room-sharing is recommended for your baby's first 6 months; bed-sharing (sleeping together on the same surface) is **not** recommended. Sleeping in the same room but not in the same bed as your baby (room-sharing) is a good idea. It has been shown to reduce the risk of SIDS. Being close to your baby makes it easier to respond to early infant cues, and makes it easier to feed, comfort and monitor your baby.

Having the crib close to your bed also makes it easier to put your baby back in his or her crib, cradle or bassinet after a night time feeding, instead of keeping him or her in your bed.⁽²⁾

7. What if I don't have room for a crib?

A cradle or bassinet is a safe alternative for sleep. Follow manufacturer's instructions carefully, and make sure they are in good condition. For more information about buying a safe crib, cradle or bassinet, visit:

[http://healthy Canad ians.gc.ca/kids-enfants/sleep-sommeil/cribs-berceaux-eng.php](http://healthy Canadians.gc.ca/kids-enfants/sleep-sommeil/cribs-berceaux-eng.php)

8. Why are bumper pads not recommended, but it is okay to use a bassinet with padded sides?

The issue is that bumper pads are soft, detachable bedding that can be a suffocation and strangulation risk. While bassinets may have soft sided interiors, they are a fixed part of the bassinet, thus not the same as bumper pads. Bassinets sold in Canada must meet the Canadian Government Safety Standards. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for assembly and use. For more information about creating a safe place for your baby's sleep, visit: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/sleep-coucher-eng.php#a51>

9. What do I do if I can't afford a crib or cradle or when I'm away from home and a crib or cradle isn't available?

Ask your public health nurse or call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-5465 (LINK) toll-free for information if you can't afford a crib. They can help you find local organizations that may be able to help.

SIDS Canada recommends that while you are away from home, if no crib is available, your child can sleep on a thin mat or blanket on the floor away from clutter, pets, vents, electrical outlets, cords, etc.⁽⁸⁾ **Don't use** child safety seats, thick blankets, beds, couches, waterbeds and other soft surfaces—they aren't safe to use in place of a crib.

10. Can I put more than one baby in the same crib or bassinet?

Get a separate crib for each baby. There's a risk that one infant can entrap the other, causing suffocation if in the same crib, just as there is when a baby sleeps with an adult or another child.⁽⁹⁾

11. Is it okay to let my baby sleep on my chest when I am awake?

Skin-to-skin contact with your young baby has many benefits for both of you **as long as you are awake**, and able to supervise your baby. Both moms and dads can provide skin-to-skin care whether your baby is awake or asleep. However, it is not safe to do this if you are tired or sleepy. Don't take the chance – put your baby back to sleep in his or her own crib and do skin-to-skin when you are more alert. For more information on the benefits of skin-to-skin, visit:

<http://www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca/postpartum-the-first-six-weeks/at-the-birth-centre/getting-to-know-your-newborn/>

12. Can I feed my baby lying in bed?

Taking your baby into bed for feeding or for comfort is only risky if you fall asleep. Lying down to feed is an effective feeding position for many mothers. Be aware, it is easier to fall asleep if you are in this position, especially if you are tired.

When can positioning help to prevent SIDS?

13. Is it best to just keep my baby on her back all the time – even when she is awake?

No, **when your baby is awake**, it's important to use a variety of positions throughout the day, including lying on her tummy, side-lying, and sitting – while you are closely supervising. These different positions are important for healthy development and will also prevent flat areas on your baby's head (plagiocephaly).

To learn more, visit:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwId=abo1675>

For more information about how you can promote the health and safety of your young children, visit: www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca If you have specific questions, call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-LINK(5465) for 24-hour nurse advice and health information or talk to your healthcare provider.

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