INFANT SLEEP POSITION

What Position Should My Baby Sleep in?

Nurses, doctors and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that healthy babies, up to 1 year of age, sleep on their backs (at night and for nap) to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), also known as crib death. If a baby rolls over from back to side or stomach then they can be left in that position. A number of studies have been performed to find out some of the causes of SIDS. On the basis of this research, doctors in some other countries, including England, Australia, and Norway, began advising parents to place their infants on their backs to sleep, and since then fewer babies have been dying of SIDS. The thought of SIDS can be very scary: remember that crib death is very rare. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your nurse practitioner or doctor.

Should all babies sleep on their back?

You should talk to your baby’s doctor or nurse practitioner about which sleeping position is best for your new baby. There are certain health conditions that might require some babies to sleep on their bellies. If your baby was born with a birth defect, was born prematurely, spits up frequently, or has a lung, heart, or breathing problem, it is important that you talk with your baby’s nurse practitioner or doctor about the sleep position that is best for your baby.

Can babies choke if they sleep on their backs?

Many parents are concerned that their baby will choke on spit-up or vomit if he sleeps on his back. However, there is no evidence to suggest that sleeping on the back causes choking. Millions of babies now sleep on their backs and there has not been any increase in choking.

What if your baby cries when placed on her back?

Some babies don’t seem to like sleeping on their backs. You may find that your baby doesn’t sleep as well in this position, or seems more irritable when placed on the back. Remember that every child is different. You can try other things that may help to soothe your new baby in these positions, such as soft music or your gentle touch. Be sure to talk to your baby’s doctor or nurse practitioner if you have worries about your baby’s sleep.

What else can you do to protect your new baby from SIDS?

- Make sure your baby sleeps on a firm surface. Don’t put your baby down on a fluffy blanket or sheepskin. Don’t use wedges or positioners. Keep stuffed animals, loose bedding, bumpers, pillows or soft toys out of your baby’s crib.
- Have your baby sleep in the same room as you do. Do not let your baby sleep in bed with you. Keep the baby’s bassinet or crib right near your bed so you can easily watch or reach your baby when
needed. Babies who sleep in the same bed as parents are at risk of suffocation, strangulation or SIDS (could be rolled over on or get tangled in the sheets).

- Keep your baby’s room temperature warm, but not too warm. If it’s too warm for you, then it’s too warm for your baby.
- Keep your baby’s environment smoke-free. Babies who are exposed to smoke have an increased risk of SIDS. Don’t let anyone smoke around your baby. For the nearest smoking cessation programs visit http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/tobacco-control-advocacy/
- Be sure to take your baby for her regular checkups and vaccinations. If your baby seems sick, don’t hesitate to call your nurse practitioner or doctor.
- Share this information with all family members, friends, and child care providers who care for your baby.