

Safe Sleep for You and Your Baby

A Guide for Breastfeeding Families

Sleeping near your baby provides many benefits. But you may worry about whether it's safe. This guide will help you decide on the sleep arrangement that's right for you.

There are many advantages to sleeping near your baby. Your baby settles more easily. It is also easier for you to rest while still meeting your baby's nighttime needs. Sleeping with or near your baby makes breastfeeding easy. In fact, mothers who sleep near their babies are able to breastfeed for a longer time (Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, 2008; UNICEF, 2005).

What Does Sleeping Near Your Baby Include?

Sleeping near your baby includes having your baby sleep:

- In your bed,
- In a crib or bassinet in the same room with you, or
- In a co-sleeper that is attached to the side of your bed.

How Common is Sleeping Near Your Baby?

Mothers all over the world sleep with or next to their babies. Even in the U.S., approximately half of American parents sleep with their children either all or part of the night (McKenna, 2004).

What Health Organizations are Saying

In the past few years, three major health organizations have noted that sleeping near your baby can reduce the risk of SIDS, especially during the first few months of life. According to the recent statement on breastfeeding by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2005):

Mothers and babies should sleep in proximity to each other to facilitate breastfeeding (p. 500).

The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (2008) states that:

Some forms of parent-child co-sleeping provides physical protection for the infant against cold and extends the duration of breastfeeding, thus improving the chances of survival of the slowly developing human infant (p. 38).

Similarly, UNICEF (2005) recommends sleeping near your baby to prevent SIDS and facilitate breastfeeding.

Bringing your baby into bed with you means you can breastfeed in comfort. This may be why mothers who share a bed with their babies tend to breastfeed for longer than those who don't (p. 2).

What You Should Avoid

Friends, relatives or others you know may tell you that sleeping near your baby is dangerous—especially if your baby is in the same bed. You should know that while there is controversy about this topic, there is currently not enough evidence to support routine recommendations against sleeping with your baby (Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, 2008). There are ways to make sleeping with your baby safer.

To keep your baby safe, **NEVER** sleep with your baby if you, your partner, or anyone who sleeps with your baby:

- Have had more than one alcoholic beverage,
- Have taken medicine that makes you sleepy (such as medicines for pain, colds or allergies, or a cough),
- Smoke or allow others to smoke around your baby (Second-hand smoke increases your baby's risk of SIDS),
- Are overly tired or heavy sleepers,
- Have had any illegal drugs, or
- Have other children or pets in your bed.

NEVER sleep with your baby on a couch or sofa. Your baby can roll out of your arms, become trapped and suffocate.

NEVER sleep with your baby on a sagging or soft mattress, waterbed, or on a mattress pushed against the wall or a piece of furniture. Your baby could become trapped here too and suffocate (Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, 2008; UNICEF, 2005).



How to Safely Sleep Near Your Baby

Here are some steps you can take to help your baby stay safe while sleeping.

- Always place your baby on her back to sleep in visual distance of a responsible adult.
- Wherever your baby sleeps, the mattress should be firm, flat and clean.
- Keep your baby in your room for at least the first six months.
- Remove pillows, stuffed toys, quilts and fluffy comforters.
- Dress your baby in a one-piece sleeper to avoid having a blanket in your baby's face.
- Be sure that your baby is not overheated.

By sleeping near your baby, you will discover what mothers all over the world know—that it is the easiest way to meet your babies' nighttime needs. You will get enough sleep this way too!

Enjoy a safe night's sleep with your baby!

For further reading

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. (2008). Protocol #6: Guideline on Co-sleeping and breastfeeding. www.bfmed.org.

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2005). Breastfeeding and use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 115, 496-506.

McKenna, J. J. (2004). Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS or Cot Death): Infant sleep, breastfeeding and infant sleeping arrangements. In C. Ember and M. Ember (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology* (pp. 506-518). New York: Kluwer.

McKenna, J.J., & McDade, T. (2005). Why babies should never sleep alone: A review of the co-sleeping controversy in relation to SIDS, bedsharing, and breastfeeding. *Paediatric Respiratory Review*, 6, 134-152.

Morgan, K.H., Groer, M.W., & Smith, L.J. (2006). The controversy about what constitutes safe and nurturant infant sleep. *JOGNN*, 35, 684-691.

UNICEF (2005). Sharing a bed with your baby: A guide for breastfeeding mothers. www.babyfriendly.org.uk



For More Information

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine: www.bfmed.org

Dr. James McKenna, Mother-baby Behavioral Sleep Lab at University of Notre Dame: www.nd.edu/~jmckenn1/lab/

Dr. Helen Ball, Parent-infant sleep Lab, Durham University, UK <http://www.dur.ac.uk/sleep.lab/>

For current updates from the Survey of Mothers' Sleep and Fatigue, <http://uppitysciencechick.com/sleep.html>