

THE MEGAPHONE!

[SAFE SLEEP SPACES FOR BABIES!]

Promoting the voices of Manitoba's children and youth

2014

Special
Caregiver's
Edition!

ISSUE 13

What is SIDS or SUID?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or Sudden Unexplained Infant Death are terms that refer to the unexplained death of an infant, usually during sleep, of a seemingly healthy baby who is less than a year old.³

Creating Safe Spaces for Babies

The Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) ensures the voices of children and youth who are connected with the child welfare system in Manitoba are heard. This includes promoting the needs of infants and children who are unable to speak up on their own. One of the ways we do that is by reviewing the circumstances of deaths of children involved with child welfare agencies, and the services they received. This is a unique opportunity to advocate for better service to children. Our focus in child death investigations is to prevent deaths of children in similar situations in the future.

SIDS or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (sometimes referred to as **SUID- Sudden Unexplained Infant Death**), is, sadly, a type of death we frequently see in our work at the Children's Advocate. Between April 2013 and March 2014, risks in a baby's sleep space were identified in 60% of the infant deaths in Manitoba where the cause of death was Undetermined. As a caregiver, the choices you make can help protect your baby. Health Canada and the Manitoba Sacred Babies program make the following suggestions on how to increase **SAFETY** as well as what can increase **RISK**:^{4,7}

SIDS/SUID is a leading cause of death in babies aged 1 month to 1 year; most SIDS deaths occur between 2 months and 4 months of age.⁶

What increases SAFETY?

SLEEPING ALONE. Your baby needs his or her own sleep space.
ON BACK. Put your baby down on his or her back to sleep.
SAFE CRIB. Use a crib that meets current safety standards.
FIRM MATTRESS. Make sure baby's sleep surface is firm.
FRESH COOL AIR. Keep baby's room cool - between 19-21°C.
A CLEAR ZONE. Keep toys, stuffed animals and bumper pads out of baby's sleep space.
SMOKE FREE SPACE. Make sure the air baby breathes is always clean.
SUPPORT. Ask for help from friends and family.
BREASTFEEDING is linked with increased safety and many other positive outcomes for a baby.
PACIFIER USE is also protective.
KNOWLEDGE. Educate yourself about what's safest for baby - there is a lot of information available!

ALONE on BACK
in **CRIB**
for **every** sleep!



Share your room - NOT your bed!



What increases RISK?

BED SHARING. While this is more common in some cultures, child death research clearly links a shared sleep space with higher death rates. Specific risks include overheating and suffocation. Bed sharing and overheating are two risk factors we continue to see in recent infant death investigations in Manitoba.
OVERHEATING. Swaddling or bundling, extra layers & rooms that are too warm can put your baby in greater danger.
CRIB CLUTTER. Stuffed animals, pillows, bumper pads, extra blankets inside the crib can increase risk too.
SOFT BEDS. Waterbeds, sagging mattress, air mattresses, pillow top mattresses, couches, or any other surface that is soft increases risk. Babies need a firm sleep surface.
SMOKE. Baby's world should be smoke free - that means avoiding smoking around baby and not handling baby when your skin or clothing smell like smoke. This goes for friends and family too!

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Myth:

"If my baby spits up or vomits during sleep, they will choke if they are sleeping on their back."⁶

Fact:

Babies automatically cough up or swallow fluid that they spit up or vomit—it's a reflex to keep the airway clear. Studies show no increase in the number of deaths from choking among babies who sleep on their backs. In fact, babies who sleep on their backs might clear these fluids better because of the way the body is built. (See the illustration below for more explanation.)

It can be difficult to understand that actions which are meant to be caring and nurturing, like bundling and bed sharing, can increase risk. Parents need the support of extended family, health, education, and other social services to ensure a safe sleep space for their infants.

When friends and family help out, make sure you talk with them about safe sleep for your baby. Not everyone knows current information, even if they have cared for other children in the past. Make sure that anyone who takes care of your baby understands safe sleep and the information discussed in this newsletter. These suggestions can help protect your baby and increase the safety of your baby's sleep space.

Be an active and informed caregiver!

What about carseats?

Babies will fall asleep in strollers, swings, bouncers, and car seats. But they are not meant for sleeping as your baby's head can fall forward and the airway can be constricted. Remove your baby to a crib as soon as you arrive where you are going.

Support to stop smoking for every caregiver as well as consistent information about safe sleep can be effective in preventing sleep deaths in infants. Sometimes it's not easy to take care of a baby. It's okay to ask for help.

Being a caregiver for a baby can feel really overwhelming sometimes. If you need support, talk to your family, friends, doctor, your baby's pediatrician, social worker, public health nurse, Family First visitor, or other trusted person and let them know how you are feeling and if you are feeling overwhelmed.

OVERHEATING

Overheating can occur when an infant is overdressed or bundled, has their head covered, is lying on their tummy, or lying close to an adult.

For sleep, babies should be dressed in a sleeper and if necessary, covered up to his or her chest with arms free using a light blanket with the edges tucked firmly into the sides of the mattress. Indoors or in a car, the baby's face should not be covered.⁶

What about a cradleboard or tikinagan?

When using these, be sure to place it flat on the floor when baby is sleeping. Make sure your baby is able to breathe freely and that they are dressed lightly and not at risk of overheating.

"It is estimated that **ONE THIRD** of all SIDS deaths could be prevented if maternal smoking was eliminated."⁷

We wish to say a special thank you to Wanda & Liz from the Maternal Child Health Program of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs for their sharing and consultation as we developed this caregiver's resource. **Miiigwetch & thank you!**

BED SHARING

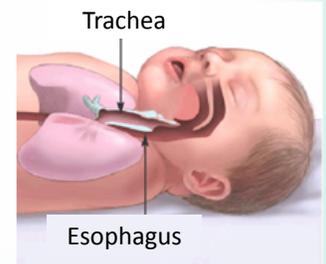
Bed sharing can foster attachment between parent and baby, support longer periods of sleep for both baby and parent, and encourage infants to breastfeed longer. However, bed sharing has potential hazards, including entrapment, overheating and smothering by other people in the bed, or from soft bedding that is not designed for infants.

In a recent study, the risk of SIDS was 5 times higher when bed sharing happened, even when the parents were non-smoking, there was no other use of drugs and the baby was breastfed.⁸

Is a baby more likely to choke on its back?



No! When a baby is on its back, the air pipe (trachea) is above the food tube (esophagus). Anything that is spit up from the stomach has to go against gravity to be inhaled into the air pipe. A healthy baby generally will turn its head so that spit up goes out of its mouth – not back down its throat.



Stomach sleeping is dangerous for baby



However, when a baby is on its stomach, anything spit up can block the air pipe and cause choking or breathing problems.

ALONE ON BACK IN CRIB

FOR every sleep!

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