

SIDS: Lower Your Baby's Risk

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also known as crib death, is one of the most terrifying things a parent can face. Approximately one of every 1,000 babies born in the United States will die from SIDS. SIDS is the most common cause of death in infants between 2 weeks and 1 year old.

No one knows what causes SIDS, but doctors think it involves a problem with the brain's control of unconscious breathing. It is especially scary because it is both unpredictable and widespread. While there is no cure for SIDS, there are a number of things you can do to significantly lower your baby's risk:

- Always put your baby down to sleep on his or her back. Babies who sleep on their stomachs are between 3 1/2 and 9 times more likely to die of crib death. Since 1994, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that parents avoid putting their babies down on their stomachs to sleep until they are at least 6 months old.
- Keep cigarette smoke away from your baby. Passive inhalation of cigarette smoke is thought to play a role in SIDS. Mothers should avoid smoking at any time - especially during pregnancy. Exposure to smoke while in the womb can increase a child's risk of SIDS by as much as four times.
- Avoid soft bedding. Lamb's wool and pillows in your baby's crib, as well as waterbed mattresses, can increase the chances of suffocation.
- Try not to overheat your child at night. Your child should be kept warm but not overly bundled in blankets and clothing. Keep your home at a comfortable, moderate temperature.
- NEVER have an infant sleep in a bed with a parent or other individual.

If you have more questions about SIDS, contact the "Back to Sleep" Campaign by calling 1-800-505-2742 or visit the program's Web site at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/>