



# Safer sleep for babies

A guide for parents

# Safer sleep for babies

Meeting and getting to know your baby is an extremely exciting and rewarding time. It's also the beginning of a new relationship. Babies need a lot of sleep during the first few months of their lives so it's important to ensure that they are sleeping as safely as possible.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexpected death of a baby where no cause is found. While SIDS is rare, it can still happen and there are steps parents can take to help reduce the chance of this tragedy occurring.

Although we don't yet know how to completely prevent SIDS, it is possible to significantly lower the chances of it happening

by following the advice opposite. You should try to follow the advice for all sleep periods where possible, not just at night.

This guide lists the essential things you can do, or avoid doing, to help lower the chance of SIDS and explains why they are so important. You can also talk to your midwife or health visitor if you have any questions or concerns, or get in touch with us.

**Call:** 0808 802 6869

**Visit:** [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

## Things you can do...

- ✓ Always place your baby on their back to sleep.
- ✓ Keep your baby smoke free during pregnancy and after birth.
- ✓ Breastfeed your baby, if you can.
- ✓ Place your baby to sleep in a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you for the first 6 months.
- ✓ Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress in good condition.

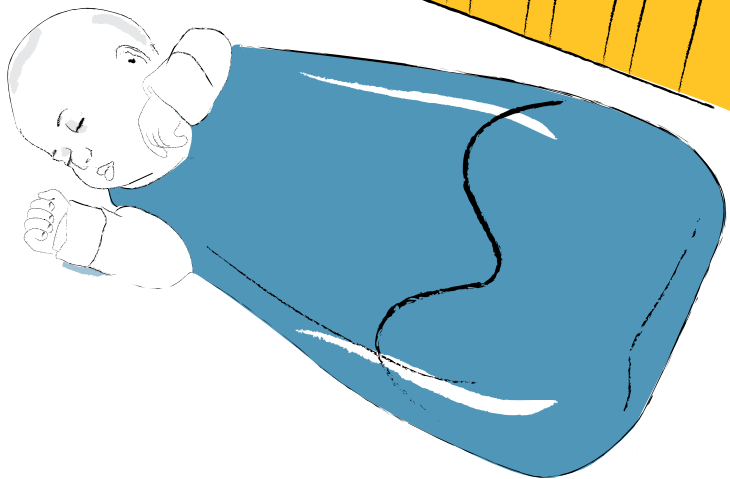
## Things to avoid...

- ✗ Never sleep on a sofa or in an armchair with your baby.
- ✗ Don't sleep in the same bed as your baby if you smoke, drink, take drugs or are extremely tired, or if your baby was born prematurely or was of low birth weight.
- ✗ Avoid letting your baby get too hot.
- ✗ Don't cover your baby's face or head while sleeping or use loose bedding.



## Always place your baby on their back to sleep

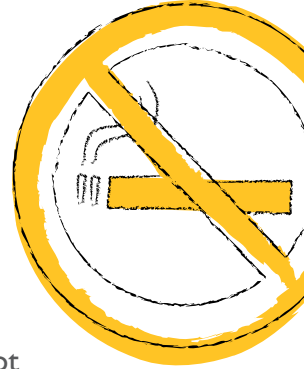
- You should always place your baby on their back to sleep and not on their front or side (unless your doctor has advised you of a medical reason to do so).
- Sleeping a baby on their front or side greatly increases the chance of SIDS.
- It is important that you always put your baby on their back as part of their regular sleep routine – the chance of SIDS is particularly high for babies who are sometimes placed on their front or side.
- If your baby has rolled onto their tummy, you should turn them onto their back again.
- Once your baby can roll from back to front and back again, on their own, they can be left to find their own position.



## ✓ Keep your baby smoke free during pregnancy & after birth

- Both you and your partner should try not to smoke during pregnancy and after the birth.
- Smoking both during pregnancy and after your baby is born greatly increases the chance of SIDS, and your baby can be affected by either you or your partner smoking.
- You should also keep your baby out of smoky areas – don't let people smoke near your baby and keep your home, car, and other places your baby spends time, smoke free.

- If you or your partner smoke, you should not share a bed with your baby as this greatly increases the chance of SIDS even if you do not smoke in the bedroom or anywhere else at home.



You have a much better chance of giving up smoking if you get help to quit. Speak to your midwife or health visitor or call NHS smokefree on 0800 022 4332

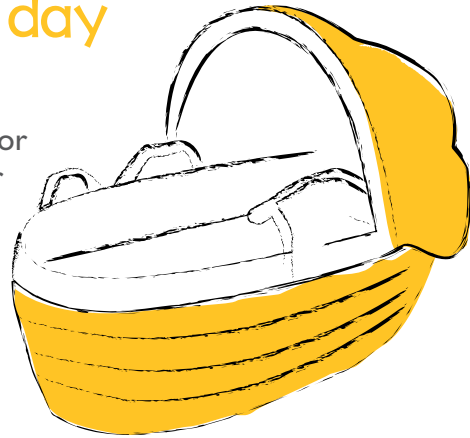
## ✓ Breastfeed your baby

- Breastfed babies have a lower chance of SIDS.
- You should try and breastfeed your baby, even if only some of the time – breastfeeding some of the time may reduce the chance of SIDS compared to formula feeding alone, but exclusive breastfeeding lowers the chance most.



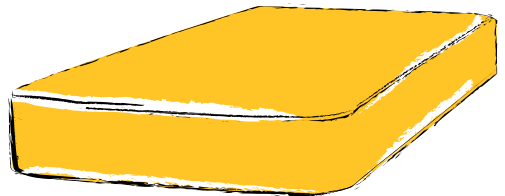
✓ Place your baby to sleep in a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you for the first 6 months, even during the day

- The safest place for your baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you.
- The chance of SIDS is lower when babies sleep in a separate cot in the same room as their parents.



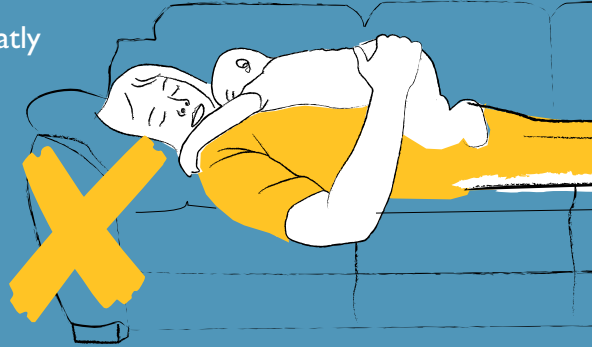
✓ Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress in a good condition

- You should avoid using soft or bulky bedding (such as quilts, pillows and duvets) as these increase the chance of SIDS.
- You should sleep your baby on a firm, flat mattress that is clean and in good condition. A mattress with a waterproof cover will help you keep it clean and dry.



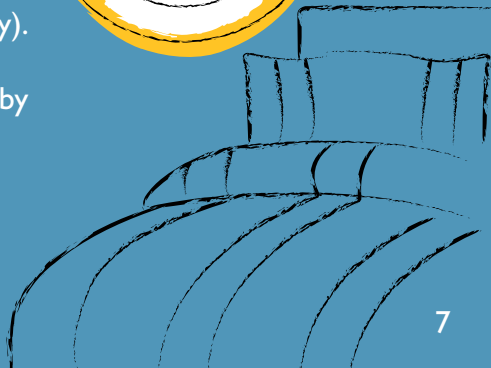
## **X** Never sleep on a sofa or in an armchair with your baby

- Sofa sharing with your baby greatly increases the chance of SIDS.
- Never sleep on a sofa or in an armchair with your baby either next to you or on your chest, even during the day.



## **X** Don't sleep in the same bed as your baby if you smoke, drink or take drugs

- Bed sharing increases the chance of SIDS and is particularly dangerous if:
  - Either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom or anywhere else at home).
  - Either you or your partner has drunk alcohol or taken drugs (including medication that may make you drowsy).
- Bed sharing is also dangerous if your baby was premature (born before 37 weeks) or had a low birth weight (less than 2.5 kg or 5 ½ lbs), even if you don't smoke, drink or take drugs.



# X Avoid letting your baby get too hot

- It is important to make sure that your baby is a comfortable temperature – not too hot or too cold.
- The chance of SIDS is higher in babies who get too hot.
- A room temperature of 16-20°C, with light bedding or a lightweight well-fitting baby sleep bag, is comfortable and safe for sleeping babies.
- Advice on room temperature is intended as a guide. Every baby is different, and will need very different things. So while it's important to be informed about overheating you need to check your baby regularly to see if he or she is too hot. Look for sweating or feel the baby's tummy – your baby's hands and feet will usually be cooler, which is normal. If your baby is hot, remove one or more layers of bedclothes. Babies who are unwell need fewer, not more bedclothes.

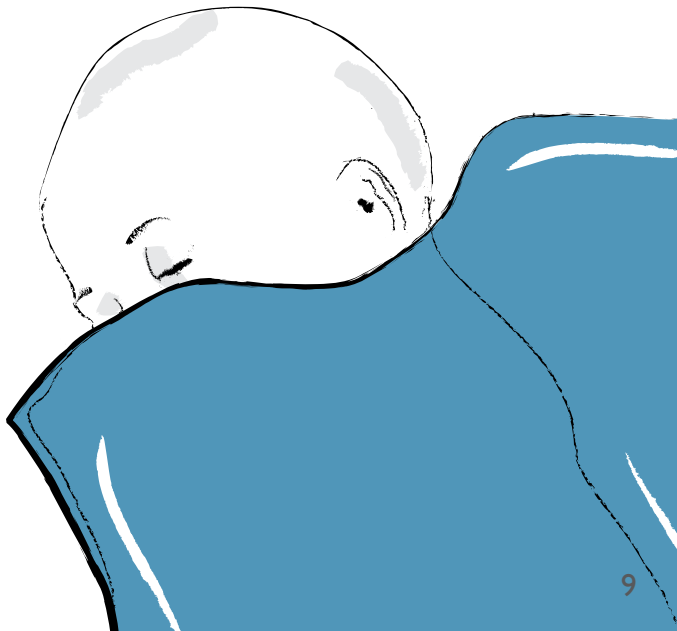


Order a room thermometer  
Visit: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

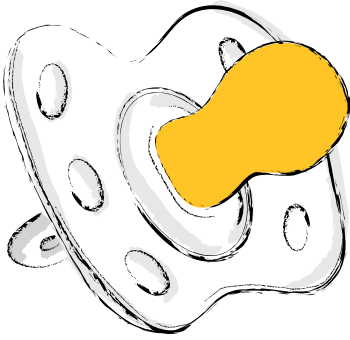


# X Don't cover your baby's face or head while sleeping or use loose bedding

- The use of loose bedding which can cover your baby's face or head can be dangerous and can increase the chance of SIDS.
- To keep your baby safe and their head uncovered while they are sleeping you should:
  - Place your baby on their back in the 'feet to foot' position – this is where the baby's feet are placed at the foot of the cot – so they can't wriggle down under the blankets.
  - Use blankets which are firmly tucked in, no higher than the baby's shoulders or baby sleeping bag.
  - Babies do not need to wear hats indoors.



# Using a dummy

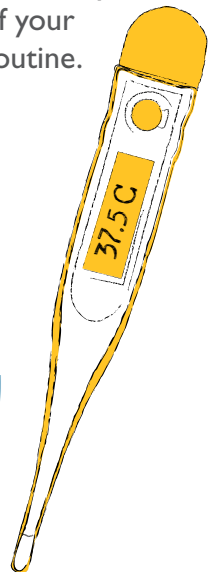


Some research suggests that it is possible that using a dummy when putting a baby down to sleep might reduce the risk of sudden infant death.

- If you choose to use a dummy, wait until your baby is over 4 weeks old, and breastfeeding is well established. Breastfeeding is good for you and your baby.
- Stop giving a dummy to your baby to go to sleep between 6 and 12 months.
- Don't force your baby to take a dummy or put it back in if your baby spits it out. **Don't use a neck cord.**
- Don't put anything sweet on the dummy, and don't offer during awake time.
- Using an orthodontic dummy is best as it adapts to your baby's mouth shape.
- If you choose to use a dummy make sure it is part of your baby's regular sleep routine.

## Showing signs of being unwell

If your baby shows signs of being unwell for more than 24 hours you should seek medical advice.



## About The Lullaby Trust

The Lullaby Trust promotes expert advice on safer baby sleep and provides specialist support for bereaved families.

Working with the NHS we run a national health visitor led service for bereaved parents, Care of Next Infant (CONI) programme, which supports families before and after the birth of their new baby.

We are committed to supporting new research projects to understand much more about what causes these tragic deaths and how we can prevent them.

Advice including factsheets and the latest research can be found at [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

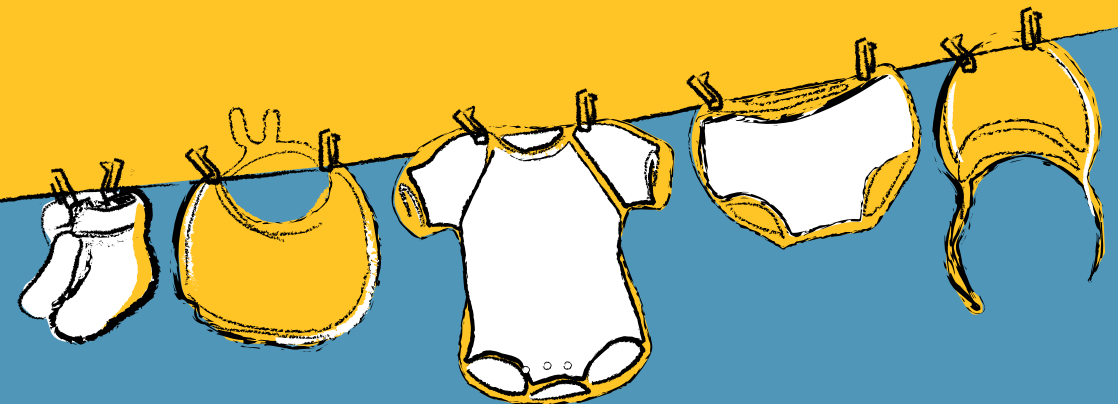
We campaign tirelessly, lobbying government to keep sudden infant death on the public health agenda.

You can find more information  
about SIDS and risks:

Call: 0808 802 6869

Email: [info@lullabytrust.org.uk](mailto:info@lullabytrust.org.uk)

Visit: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)



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