

Safe Sleep Practice Guide

This guide is designed to provide information regarding safe sleep practices for infants under the age of one. The child welfare worker can use this information to guide the discussion and provide education to the families regarding safe sleep practices and assist in the required plan development.

The ABCS of Safe Sleep:

- **ALONE** -A baby should sleep in their own safety-approved crib, bassinet, or pack and play NOT with someone. Sleeping on the same space with another person is dangerous for babies. It is recommended that the infant's crib is near the parent's bed---*share the room, not the bed*.
- **BACK**-Place the baby to sleep on their back for every nap and at night--not their side or stomach.
- **CRIBS**-The baby sleeps safest in a crib, bassinet, or pack and play on a flat firm mattress with a fitted sheet. Baby should not sleep on a couch, recliner, adult bed, or an inclined seat (like a bouncy seat or swing). No other items should be in the baby's sleep space—no pillows, blankets, toys, or bumper pads.
- **Smoke and Vape Free**-No one should smoke or vape around the baby or their sleep space.

When discussing safe sleep with parents/caregivers:

- Ask open-ended questions to encourage honest more in-depth conversations.
- Show respect and understanding of individual family's beliefs, needs, and concerns.
- Probe for questions or concerns regarding the recommendations.
- Expect resistance or questions based on past experience, social and family influence, and cultural practices.
- Work together with the family to reduce the risk of unsafe sleep practices for each unique family/caregiver.

Safe Sleeping

Unsafe sleep practices can result in suffocation or strangulation causing an infant to not be able to breathe and result in death. Unsafe sleep can also increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

From June 2015-July 2016, 47 of the 152 maltreatment child fatalities in North Carolina were a result of unsafe sleep. Unsafe sleep makes up the largest category of maltreatment deaths in the 0-5 age range. The data along with the information gathered in child fatality reviews has brought attention to the State's need for guidance on safe sleep. As a result, the Division has partnered with UNC Maternal and Child Health to develop resources for child welfare workers to help improve safe sleep practices in the home and reduce the risk of death.

Please find a list of questions with responses that can be used by child welfare workers to encourage discussion and provide education regarding infant safe sleep with families:

Where does the infant sleep for naps and at night?

Recommendation: Children under one must have a safety-approved crib, pack and play, or bassinet with a firm and flat sleep surface. For more information on sleep location click [HERE](#).

Reason: Research has found that these surfaces are the safest place for a baby when they are sleeping to reduce the risk of a baby dying by from suffocation or SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

Follow-Up: It is dangerous for infants to sleep on a sofa, adult bed, or inclined seat like a swing or bouncer seat. These surfaces increase the risk of suffocation or other sleep related deaths.

<p>What is in the infant's sleep space?</p>	<p>Recommendation: For the first year an infant's sleep space should only include a firm and flat surface with a fitted sheet. No other items should be in the sleep space. This means no blankets, pillows, toys, bumper pads, or sleep positioners.”</p> <p>Reason: Research has found that an infant is more likely to die due to suffocation when there are extra items in the sleep space.</p> <p>Follow-up: Parents and caretakers often place extra soft bedding in the infant's sleep space to make it cozier or warmer, however these items can make it harder for an infant to breathe and cause them to die. It may be helpful to consider wearable blankets, such as SleepSacks, to keep infants warm.</p>
<p>How is the infant placed to sleep for naps and at night?</p>	<p>Recommendation: Children under one should always be placed on their back for sleep for nap time and nighttime. It is fine if the infant rolls to their side or back on their own, but they should be placed to sleep on their back.</p> <p>Reason: Research has found that placing a baby to sleep on their backs greatly reduces the risk of infants dying.</p> <p>Follow-up: Infants are less likely to choke on their backs and helps to reduce the risk of SIDS and suffocation. Click HERE for a video about why babies are safer on their back and won't choke.</p>
<p>Are there times that the infant sleeps in the same space with anyone?</p>	<p>Recommendation: Children under one should not sleep in the bed or other sleep space with anyone, including siblings and pets. Instead, it is recommended to place infants in a crib, portable crib, or bassinet in the same room with a parent near their sleep space. Parents can share the room with an infant for sleep, but not the bed. It is even more dangerous for an infant to sleep with another person on a sofa or recliner. The preference for providing care for an infant at night is a surface that allows a parent to remain awake and ensure that the infant is returned to a safe sleep space. If the decision is to provide care for the infant in bed with the caretaker, the safety plan must include additional details on how the parent will ensure the infant is placed on their back in a separate sleep space once the care is completed. This can include setting a timer on the phone in case you fall asleep or asking someone to stay awake with you while you are feeding or caring for the baby.</p> <p>Reason: Infants sleeping with another individual can easily become entrapped or smothered. Most infants in North Carolina who die due to sleep related causes do so when sleeping with another person.</p> <p>Follow-up: There are number of reasons a parent sleeps with an infant both intentionally and by accident. Factors that can make sleeping on the same surface more dangerous include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an infant is less than 4 months old, was born preterm or at low-birth weight, was/is exposed to smoke or vape. • When the sleep-space is a sofa or recliner, is a very soft or air mattress, includes pillows and soft bedding. • When the person sleeping with the infant consumed alcohol, medicines, or drugs that make it harder to wake up, or is overly tired; smokes or vapes; not the infant's primary caretaker/parent. <p>Click HERE for a client handout about understanding the risks of sleeping with your baby and tips for safer sleep at night.</p>
<p>Is the infant exposed to smoking or vaping?</p>	<p>Recommendation: The living and sleep spaces for infants should be smoke and vape free.</p>

	<p>Reason: Research has found that smoke exposure has been shown to increase the risk of infants dying of sleep-related causes, including SIDS.</p> <p>Follow-up: Anyone interested in quitting should connect to QuitlineNC: https://www.quitlinenc.com/. Click HERE for more information about keeping babies safe from tobacco.</p>
<p>Is anyone impaired by substance use while providing care for the infant?</p>	<p>Recommendation: Care of an infant should only be provided by a sober parent/caregiver.</p> <p>Reason: Substance use can make parents/caretakers sleepy and less aware making it difficult to care for an infant. This makes it harder to practice safe sleep and sleeping with an infant very dangerous. Substances include alcohol, marijuana, legal and illegal drugs and medications that can alter mental status. This can also include over the counter cold and sleep aid medications that can impair a parents' capacity to provide care for the infant.</p> <p>Follow-up: It will be helpful to maintain a list of local substance abuse and mental health providers who can provide services to caretakers who are seeking assistance. Anyone interested in seeking help for alcohol abuse should connect to https://www.alcoholdrughelp.org/ or call 1-800-688-4232.</p>
<p>Who else is providing care for your infant?</p>	<p>Recommendation: Be sure that anyone who provides care for your infant follows safe sleep recommendations.</p> <p>Reason: Infant safe sleep practices should be followed for every nap and nighttime sleep. Infants are at an increased risk of dying when other caregivers do not know or follow safe sleep practices. Click HERE for more information about talking to others about safe sleep.</p>
<p>Are there other resources available to obtain additional information?</p>	<p>Video that can be shared with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National the Safe to Sleep campaign 7min video 2 minute video <p>Safe Sleep NC www.safesleepnc.org</p> <p>Women's Health Branch: Publications and Manuals https://whb.ncpublichealth.com/provPart/pubmanbro.htm</p> <p>Consumer Protection Safety Committee (CPSC) https://www.cpsc.gov/SafeSleep</p> <p>NIH Safe to Sleep https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/</p> <p>Cribs for Kids https://cribsforkids.org/</p>