



Safer sleep for **baby**



6 steps to safer sleeping

Welcome to 'safer sleep for baby'

This booklet has been put together to help you keep your baby safe as they sleep. Having the right information and understanding the risks can help you to do this.

Each year around 200 babies will die unexpectedly before their first birthday. Many of these deaths are classified as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or cot death, which usually happens when babies are sleeping.

No-one wants to think about this happening to their baby and we don't want you to spend this special time worrying.

SIDS claims the lives of approximately 200 babies every year in the UK - around 4 babies per week.

You should follow our 6 steps whenever you put your baby down to sleep to reduce the risks.

We know that every baby is different and if you have any questions or worries, please speak to a health professional or contact your local family hub.

We hope you find the booklet useful, here's to safer sleep for baby and sweeter dreams for you!





Follow our **SIX** steps

1

Always protect your baby from cigarette smoke during pregnancy and after birth. If you or your partner smokes, never share a bed with your baby. This can increase the risk of death for your baby.

2

Give your baby a clear, flat, separate sleep space, in the same room as you, such as a cot or Moses basket. Never fall asleep with baby on a sofa or chair; this can increase the risk of death by 50%.

3

Never fall asleep with baby after drinking alcohol or taking drugs, including medications that may make you drowsy.

4

Always put your baby to sleep on their back with their feet to the foot of the cot or Moses basket.

5

Keep baby's head and face uncovered and make sure they don't get too hot. The room they sleep in should be between 16-20°C.

6

Breastfeed your baby. If you need help with breastfeeding, talk to a health professional or contact your local family hub.

Babies should sleep in the same room as the adult who is caring for them for the first six months of life during the day and night.

Together we can reduce the number of babies dying unexpectedly in Lancashire each year.

Find out more at www.lancashire.gov.uk and search 'safer sleep for baby'.



Smoking

Stopping smoking, during pregnancy and after you have had your baby, is one of the most positive and rewarding achievements you can make to improve the long-term health for you and your baby. The key to giving up for good is to get support from your family, friends, and professionals. You may have a specialist stop smoking service in your area that will be able to inform, support you and offer advice.

Babies who are exposed to smoke before or after birth are at a much greater risk of developing respiratory problems and infections.

**Over a third of
SIDS deaths
could be avoided
if women didn't
smoke during
their pregnancy.**



Second hand tobacco smoke is very harmful to you and your baby, it contains over 4,000 chemicals. Smoke can linger in the air for 2 to 3 hours after you've finished a cigarette, even with a window open.

It is also important to remember that after a cigarette the smoke will still be on your clothes, hands and in your hair, and there is not enough current research for us to understand exactly how harmful this may be to your baby.

Try to introduce Nicotine Replacement Therapy as much as possible.

For more information on quitting smoking ask your midwife, GP or pharmacy team or search NHS Smoke free.

**Keep your baby
away from smoke
in your home, car
& while out
and about.**

E-Cigarettes

E-cigarettes aren't risk free; more research is needed over a longer period to know what the long-term effects may be, but they are less harmful than smoking. If using an E-cigarette helps you stay smoke free, current research suggests it is safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke. If you do choose to use an e cigarette, remember to always keep your baby away from e cigarettes and their vapour.

**Remember!
Keep e-cigarettes and
e-liquids out of the reach
of children to avoid
accidental poisoning and
always use the correct
charger.**

For more information about E-Cigarettes seek advice from your local pharmacy.

Temperature

Keep baby's head and face uncovered and make sure they don't get too hot. Research has shown that overheating arising from excessive insulation (overwrapping), or high room temperature, or both, is associated with an increased risk of sudden unexpected death in babies.

The room they sleep in should be between 16-20°C. Use a thermometer to check the temperature. If it's too hot, you can turn down the heating or open the window.

To check if your baby is too warm, the best place to feel is on their chest, with the back of your hand. Don't worry if baby's hands or feet feel cool, this is normal. If they are too warm remove a layer of bedding and/or clothing. If using a sleep bag remove your baby's clothes and make sure you continue to fit the sleep bag according to safety instructions.

What should my baby wear?

It will depend on:

- Your baby.
- The temperature of the room.
- What bedding you choose for your baby.
- The time of year.

Babies should not wear hats for sleep during the day or night as this can increase the risk of SIDS by more than three times.

Baby's bedding

- Use sheets, cellular blankets or a correctly fitted sleep bag.
- Use no more than 6 layers, this includes the vest and baby grow.
- Baby sleep bags come in various togs and each one should have a label that says when it is best to use it as a guide.
- If baby is asleep in an adult bed, make sure the space around them is free from any adult bedding.
- Don't use pillows and duvets (under 12 months) as they increase the risk of suffocation and overheating.

Pillow use alone has been shown to increase the chance of death occurring by 2.5 times.

Remember!
If you fold a blanket or sheet this should be counted as a double layer.



Where does your baby sleep?

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in their own clear, flat, separate sleep space, such as a cot or Moses basket in the same room as you. This applies to every sleep, including daytime naps, not just during the night.

The sleep space should be clear of objects, on a firm flat surface on a clean waterproof mattress with no rips, tears or perforations.

There is no evidence to support the safety of sleep pods and sleep positioners.

A safe sleep surface is a clear, flat firm mattress which is free from cot bumpers, toys, duvets, pets, and older siblings. Make sure your baby can't fall off the mattress or get trapped between the mattress and a wall or soft furnishing. Ensure the sleep space is free from anything that may cover your baby's face or become entangled around their neck.



NEVER sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby, this can increase the risk of death by 50 times.



Bed sharing

Some caregivers choose to sleep in a bed with their baby, perhaps to support breastfeeding, or to provide reassurance to baby.

Whatever the reason for bed sharing, there are some important things to remember:

- Keep baby free from pillows, loose sheets, blankets or any other items that could obstruct your baby's breathing or cause them to overheat. A high proportion of babies who die while sleeping are found with their head covered by loose bedding.
- Do not let pets or other children in the bed with baby.
- Make sure baby won't fall out of bed or get trapped between the mattress and the wall.
- Never leave a baby alone in the bed as they are at risk of falling out or wriggling into a dangerous position.

We recommend against the use of bed wedges, sleep positioners, nests or pods. Evidence shows that the safest way for your baby to sleep is on a firm mattress, in a clear cot, free of pillows, duvets or toys.

Always supervise baby.

NEVER share a bed if either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom) as this increases the risk of your baby dying.

NEVER share a bed if either you or your partner has drunk alcohol or taken drugs (including medications that may make you drowsy) this can make you less responsive to a baby.

NEVER share a bed if you are extremely tired.

NEVER share a bed if your baby was born premature (37 weeks or less).

NEVER share a bed if your baby was born at a low weight (2.5kg or 5½ lbs or less).

You should never sleep together with your baby if any of the above points apply to you or any other caregiver.



Alcohol & Drugs

Alcohol and substance use can influence a carer's decision and actions.

- Excessive sleepiness can be caused by the effects of alcohol or substances, including drugs or prescribed medication.

This means that you may go into a deeper sleep than you normally would, and are less likely to be aware of your baby lying next to you.

- If you drink alcohol in the time before bed, you may fall into a deep sleep more quickly. If you share the bed, sofa or armchair with your baby after consuming alcohol, they are at a much higher risk of becoming trapped, suffocating or overheating. **Never** put yourself in a situation where you may fall asleep with your baby on a bed, chair or sofa.

- Some drugs that are prescribed for you can cause you to become drowsy. **Never** sleep with your baby if you, or anyone else in the bed, has taken drugs that may cause drowsiness (legal or illegal).

- Some medications that are bought over the counter, can also make you sleepy. If any caregiver is unsure, ask a pharmacist or GP for advice.



If any caregiver has drunk alcohol or taken drugs, including medications that may make them drowsy, NEVER share a bed with your baby. Overlay in these circumstances can lead to a criminal investigation.

Twins and Multiple Births

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in their own clear, flat, separate sleep space, such as a cot or Moses basket. Sharing a bed with an adult is a significant risk for babies born prematurely or at a low birthweight, which is common in multiples.

Many caregivers find that putting babies to sleep in the same cot (co-bedding) works well, at least for the first few weeks or months.

When babies are able to roll over, they should be placed in individual cots to prevent either baby from obstructing the breathing of the other.

You should not co-bed in a Moses basket, due to increased risk of overheating and lack of space for the babies. Babies can be positioned 'side by side' or 'feet to foot' (at both ends, so babies will be head-to-head).

You must ensure they have space between them and do not use cot separators i.e., rolled blankets, towels, or bolsters.

Caregivers of multiple birth babies can visit the Twins Trust or the Lullaby Trust for more information.

It is still important to follow the 6 steps to safer sleep for each baby, for each day and nighttime sleep.



Breastfeeding



Studies have consistently shown a lower risk of SIDS in breastfed infants.

Babies need nothing but breastmilk for the first six months of life; after that they should receive complementary foods with continued breastfeeding. Studies have consistently shown a lower risk of SIDS in breastfed babies. Exclusive breastfeeding (i.e., those who have never fed with formula milk) is associated with the lowest risk, but breastfeeding of any duration may be beneficial for a lowered chance of SIDS compared to formula feeding alone.

Support for breastfeeding is available from your midwife, health visitor, local family hub or breastfeeding peer supporter, and you can also call the national breastfeeding helpline on: **0300 100 0212.**

Worried about lack of sleep?

If you're tempted to give up breastfeeding because your baby is waking often in the night, remember that it won't last forever and you will sleep again. Babies who are formula fed also need care and attention during the night. Babies have small stomachs and are growing very quickly so it is normal for them to wake in the night.

If you decide to bed-share so that you can breastfeed lying down, see the page on bed sharing for how you can do this as safely as possible. It is also normal to feel tired and you need to take care of yourself. Nap when baby sleeps and remember to keep hydrated and eat well.

Toddlers

The risk of sudden and unexplained death once a child reaches 12 months is greatly reduced. However, your child's sleep environment should always be a safe space and free from harm and potential risks. Your child's bed and bedding should be appropriate for the age and size of your child. Children would normally be transitioning to a bed around the age of 2 years.

Their bed should be positioned away from harms which may cause injuries, such as sockets, wiring or cords, which may cause strangulation or electrocution, or heaters, which could overheat or burn a child.

All equipment should be used for the purpose it was made and safety gates should not be used once the child reaches 24 months.

Every piece of equipment should have the relevant BS Standard.

Cot mattress:

BS 7177:2008+A1:2011

Sleeping bags:

BS EN 16781: 2018



As a guide the room temperature should continue to be between 16-20°C

All children and parents are different, children with complex conditions can have very different and varied health care needs. The advice in this leaflet is valuable in planning how to safely put your child to sleep but you should also discuss and plan this with the health care professional involved in supporting your child and your family.

Sleeping bags, when used correctly, may be safer to use than sheets and blankets, which can become loose, possibly covering baby's head.

Children will have a more restful sleep if they are in their own sleep space and not sharing with other children, pets or adults.

Their bed or cot should be kept free from toys, in particular, those that are battery operated.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a health professional or contact your local family hub.

Think twice tonight

Thinking about sharing a bed with your baby tonight?

There are some circumstances when bed sharing with your baby can be very dangerous



NEVER sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby; this can increase the risk of death by **50%**.

NEVER share a bed with your baby if...

- you or any caregiver smokes, even if you do not smoke in the bedroom
- you are extremely tired
- your baby was born at a low weight or prematurely
- you are taking medications that may make you drowsy
- you or any other caregiver has drunk alcohol or taken drugs

Give your baby a clear, flat, separate sleep space, in the same room as you, such as a cot or Moses basket.

If you need support or more information, speak to your midwife, health visitor or contact your local hub.

Information contained in this booklet is based on Safer Sleeping Guidance for Children, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool & Lancashire. © Lancashire County Council 2024.

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