



# Safe infant sleep practices

by Jason Terk, M.D.

Unintentional suffocation is the leading cause of injury-related death among children less than 1 year old. Unsafe sleep environments for infants are the primary cause of infant suffocation.

The 2011 Policy Statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related deaths recommends these safe infant sleep practices to help prevent sudden unexplained infant deaths (SIUD):

- Sleeping on their back on a firm sleep surface for every sleep.
- Room-sharing without bed-sharing is recommended. Breastfeeding is recommended.
- Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib.
- Pregnant women should receive regular prenatal care.
- Consider offering a pacifier at naptime and bedtime.
- Avoid overheating.
- Do not use home heart/breathing monitors as a strategy for reducing the risk of SIDS.

## Is swaddling still safe?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and National Resource Center on Child Health and Safety, swaddling is no longer recommended in child care settings. Rachel Moon, M.D., lead author of the American Academy of Pediatrics Safe Sleep guidelines and chair of the Task Force on SIDS, states that babies should not be swaddled past 2 months of age.

Swaddling increases risks for:

- Hip dysplasia, hip dislocation and hip arthritis later in life.
- Overheating (SIDS).
- Respiratory infections.
- Suffocation.

## What about reflux?

Parents and clinicians may be concerned about babies refluxing or choking while sleeping flat on their backs in the crib.

According to Joint Recommendations of the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition and the European Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition:

- The amount of reflux in infants on their backs with head elevated is equal to or greater than in infants on their backs and laying flat.
- Positioning an infant in a car seat worsens regurgitation.
- In the majority of infants who stop breathing, reflux is not the cause.
- Reflux is not a common cause of unexplained crying, irritability, or distressed behavior in otherwise healthy infants.



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*The Center for Prevention of Child Maltreatment, led by Cook Children's, is guiding a city-wide awareness campaign on safe infant sleep practices. For more information, please contact Dyann Daley, M.D., executive director, The Center for Prevention of Child Maltreatment at [dyann.daley@cookchildrens.org](mailto:dyann.daley@cookchildrens.org) or Jamye Coffman, M.D., medical director, The Center for Prevention of Child Maltreatment and CARE (Child Advocacy Resources and Evaluation) Team at [jamye.coffman@cookchildrens.org](mailto:jamye.coffman@cookchildrens.org).*