

SIDS, SUID, and Safe Sleeping Practices for Infants

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First of all, what is the difference between SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and SUID (Sudden Unexplained Infant Death)? SIDS is the death of an infant with no known cause or explanation. SUID is the death of an infant with an explanation. In other words, the sudden death of an infant, whereas an investigation finds a reason for the death.

Safe sleep habits for babies can help combat SIDS and SUID. “Any place baby sleeps needs to be kept safe for them to sleep.” ¹

Back to sleep – It cannot be stressed enough how important baby sleeping flat on their back has decreased SIDS deaths worldwide. “Compared with back sleeping, stomach sleeping increases the risk of SIDS by 1.7 - 12.9.” ²

The Crib - The crib should be new to ensure it meets safety standards and is in good condition. The mattress should be firm and well-fitted in the frame. Make sure when baby is sleeping, there is nothing in the crib except baby and a pacifier if they take one. No crib bumpers, pillows, stuffies, or blankets. It is recommended to use swaddles or sleep sacks for warmth if needed, but sometimes a sleeper is enough to keep baby comfortable.

Breastfeeding is recommended for at least the first 6 months.

Do not overheat - Keep babies’ room at a comfortable temperature, between 68 and 72 degrees F. Overheating baby is a risk factor for SIDS. Keep their heads uncovered.

No smoking – Exposing baby to cigarette smoke (while pregnant and after birth) increases the risk of SIDS death.

Co-sleeping - For the first six months, infants should sleep in the same room as the parents, either in a crib, bassinet, or a co-sleeper bed next to the adult’s bed.

There is evidence that there is a genetic variant that causes SIDS, and while the genetic factor can not be avoided if a baby has it, the other variants that contribute to death, those listed above, can and should be avoided because the genetic component may not affect the child if the other factors are absent. Keeping your baby safe during sleep should be important to everyone who cares for your child, so don’t forget to keep your caregivers informed on these practices and ensure that any daycare you use follows safe sleeping practices. Don’t be afraid to ask!

1 DONA International. (DONA International Approved Postpartum Doula Workshop, July 2021.)

2 NIH contributors. *Research on Back Sleeping And SIDS*. NIH. Available at: <https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/research/science/backsleeping#:~:text=The%20single%20most%20effective%20action,of%20SIDS%20by%201.7%20%2D%2012.9>. Accessed on March 3, 2023.