

# Sleeping Safe



The WHO and UNICEF advice “rooming-in” for at least the first six months of your baby’s life.

Some of the benefits of rooming-in are:

- ✓ Less stress for baby.
- ✓ Less stress for mom: Reassurance that baby is safe.
- ✓ Safer for baby (reduced risk of dying from SIDS).
- ✓ Allows mother to learn feeding cues and behavior.
- ✓ Allows baby to breastfeed when hungry.
- ✓ Mother establishes and maintains a good milk supply.
- ✓ Better quality sleep.
- ✓ Reduces risk of child abuse.



## “Rooming-in”:

- ✓ Mother and baby both sleep in separate beds, but in the same room
- ✓ Co-sleeping: the baby sleeps in close emotional and physical contact with the parents, usually within arms reach:
  - Baby and parents sleep in the same bed.
  - Baby and parents sleep next to each other, but on different surfaces (photo 1).

Many health agencies do not recommend sleeping with a baby younger than four months in one bed. Some researchers say that this might increase the risk of SIDS. However, there is still much uncertainty what causes SIDS, making it hard to have one advice for all. James J. McKenna (PhD) is a scientist who has done extensive research on SIDS and solitary sleeping infants vs co-sleeping. He explains that research has shown that bed sharing and increased breastfeeding and reduced maternal smoking all reduce SIDS rates. This suggests that it is not necessarily bed sharing, but how it is practiced, that can be dangerous. Both bed sharing as well as a baby sleeping in a crib in the parent’s room can be done in ways that are dangerous. The question therefore is: how can we provide a safe environment, whether the baby sleeps in a crib or with the parents in the same bed?

## Common principles:

### Incorrect

- ✓ Baby sleeping on his side or stomach. A baby who is put to sleep on his side will easily roll unto his stomach. Sleeping on his stomach might cause obstruction of baby’s face.

The following should be avoided as it might block the baby’s breathing:

- ✓ Baby sleeping on a sagging or soft mattress.
- ✓ Use of pillows, stuffed animals, loose bedding, cot bumpers, or heavy bedding.





### ***Correct***

- ✓ **Back sleeping:** Until the baby is old and strong enough to turn around himself, let him sleep on his back with his head alternating to the left and to the right.

Follow these instructions to avoid anything from blocking the baby's breathing:

- ✓ Use a firm mattress with tight-fitting sheets, no pillows, no stuffed animals, no cot bumpers, no loose bedding, nor a duvet.
- ✓ Use light blankets and sheets, which are porous and preferably cotton. In cold weather it is better to use layers of thin bedding than one heavier blanket.
- ✓ **Don't let the baby sleep on a couch, sofa, chair, recliner,** neither alone nor with a parent – he may slide between pillows or cushions and suffocate or be injured from rolling unto the floor.
- ✓ **Sleep in a smoke-free setting.** (smoke increases the risk of SIDS.)
- ✓ **Avoid overheating your baby** as this increases the risk of SIDS:
  - Room temperature should be 16-18 °C (20 °C for a newborn).
  - Don't let the baby sleep next to the radiator or in direct sunlight.
  - Don't overheat your baby with too many clothes or blankets.
  - Don't use a duvet. It might cover the baby's head and block his breathing. It also might cause the baby to be too warm.
- ✓ **Tummy time:** When the baby is awake, let him spend some time on his tummy (at least one hour a day). This will help to build the muscles in his neck, shoulders and arms. However, never leave the baby alone when he is on his tummy!



### ***Baby sleeping in his own crib:***

- ✓ Observe the common principles as described above.
- ✓ Place the crib in the same room as the parents, preferably next to the bed, so the baby is in arms reach of the parents.
- ✓ Preparing the crib:
  - Place the baby so his feet touch the foot of the crib and tuck a thin sheet and blanket along the sides and foot of the crib mattress. The blanket should cover him only as far as his chest, below his arms. Keep his arms out of the blankets (see photo 1 and 3 above).

### ***Bed sharing***

There are many reasons for parents to sleep with their baby in the same bed: It is cheap, convenient, the bedroom might be too small for a crib. Much happens during sleep and bed sharing, including touch, scent, sound, and taste. Infants thrive on touch, and grow more the more they get of it. There is no such thing as giving a baby too much contact or affection.

In his book "Sleeping With Your baby: A Parent's Guide to Co-sleeping" McKenna explains what to consider when sharing a bed with your baby:



### ***Don't bed share...***

- ✓ If you're obese.
- ✓ If you smoked during pregnancy.
- ✓ If you, or your partner, smoke now.
- ✓ If you sleep on a waterbed, with multiple pillows, a sagging mattress, a feather mattress, or a sheepskin.
- ✓ If you use heavy bedding, such as comforters or duvets.
- ✓ In overheated rooms.
- ✓ If you, or your partner, are under influence of drugs or alcohol, have taken sedatives or medications or anything that can cause drowsiness.
- ✓ If you, or your partner is ill or too tired to respond to the baby.
- ✓ If there are other children or pets who can or might climb into your bed.
- ✓ If your baby is premature or underweight (Note: skin-to-skin holding when you are awake is extremely protective for these vulnerable babies).

### ***Safe bed sharing***

- ✓ See "common principles" above.
- ✓ Place mattress without frame in the middle of the room away from the wall and all furniture  
OR
- ✓ Make sure that there is no space between the mattress and bedframe, the bed and wall or furniture where the baby can roll and become trapped.
- ✓ Parents may use firm, square pillows.
- ✓ Don't leave long hair down or wear night clothes with strings or ties.
- ✓ Don't dress your baby too warmly. If you are comfortable, your baby probably is too. Close bodily contact increases body temperature.
- ✓ Never leave an infant alone on an adult bed!

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.