**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why should my baby sleep alone? I feel safer with my baby near me.**

In Sacramento County, nearly 80% of all babies (90% of African American babies) who died from an infant sleep-related death were NOT sleeping in a crib, bassinet or portable crib. To reduce the risk of your baby dying while sleeping, put your baby to sleep in their own crib or bassinet. Remember, it doesn't take much for a baby to suffocate.

### How am I going to bond with my baby if he/she doesn't sleep with me?

Hold your baby while he/she is awake, including during feedings. It is only when your baby is sleeping that he/she needs to be alone, on his/her back and in a crib.

### How am I going to breastfeed if my baby doesn't sleep with me?

Remember—share a room, not a bed. You can put your baby’s crib or bassinet next to your bed so that you can easily pick him/her up for feedings during the night then return him/her to their own crib for sleep.

### Everyone I know sleeps with their baby—it's part of my culture.

We now know more about the safest places for babies to sleep from collecting data on infant deaths. Babies are more likely to suffocate when they sleep with an adult in an adult bed or on a couch. It is important to remember to put your baby's safety first.

[**Why do I need to get a crib or bassinet for my baby to sleep?**](http://healthybabiesbaltimore.com/parents-and-caregivers/safe-sleep)

In Sacramento County, nearly 80% of all babies who died from an infant sleep-related death were NOT sleeping in a crib, bassinet or portable crib. Cribs are regulated and have safety standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Cribs and bassinets are the safest place for your baby to sleep. Your baby should not sleep on an adult bed, couch or with pillows, cushions or stuffed animals. Your baby may suffocate from these soft materials. Your baby could become trapped in between cushions on a couch or get stuck between the bed and the wall. Car seats and infant carriers should not be used as your baby’s bed. It’s just not worth taking a risk.

<http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>

### What kind of crib should I get for my baby?

Your baby’s crib does not need to be fancy or expensive, but it must be safe. There are many types of stationary and portable cribs (such as a Pack ‘n Play™) that are safe and meet current safety guidelines. When purchasing a crib, look for Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association (JPMA) certification.

If you borrow a crib, check to make sure the slats are no more than 2-3/8 inches apart so a soda can should not fit through. Widely spaced slats can trap your baby’s head.

The mattress should be firm and fit snugly in the crib. The crib sheet should fit tightly all the way around and under the mattress. Nothing else should be in the crib with your baby – no quilts, blankets, comforters, pillows, bumpers, stuffed animals, or soft toys.

<http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>

### Won’t my baby get cold without a blanket or sheet?

You can dress your baby in a one piece sleeper or sleep sack for warmth, but do not use blankets or allow your baby to get too warm. Overheating can be a risk for infant sleep-related death. If the room temperature is comfortable for you, then it is also comfortable for your baby.

[**My mother and auntie are telling me that they placed their babies on an adult bed to sleep, so it is okay for my baby to sleep on an adult bed.**](http://healthybabiesbaltimore.com/parents-and-caregivers/safe-sleep) **Is that wrong?**

We didn't know as much about infant sleep-related deaths or ways to reduce the risk until the early 1990s. Some babies slept on adult beds—but it was not safe. There is no way to know which babies will die while sleeping, but we do know how to reduce the risk. We also know that today’s pillow-top memory-foam mattresses are really soft compared to older mattresses. The safest sleep surface for a baby is a firm crib mattress with a fitted sheet. In Sacramento County, nearly 80% of all babies (90% of African American babies) who died from an infant sleep-related death were NOT sleeping in a crib, bassinet or portable crib. One of the most effective and easiest ways to reduce the risk of your baby dying while sleeping is to place your baby alone, on his/her back and in a crib- for naps and at night. ALWAYS.

**What if my baby's grandparents or another caregiver wants to place my baby to sleep on his/her stomach for naptime?**

It is very important that **everyone** who cares for your baby uses alone, back, crib for your baby for all sleep times—for naps and at night. Babies who usually sleep on their backs but who are then placed to sleep on their stomachs, such as for a nap, are at **very**high risk for suffocating while sleeping.

**What if my baby can't get used to sleeping on his/her back?**

The baby's comfort is important, but safety is more important. Parents and caregivers should place babies on their backs to sleep even if they seem less comfortable or sleep more lightly than when on their stomachs.

Some babies don't like sleeping on their backs at first, but most get used to it quickly. The earlier you start placing your baby on his/her back to sleep, the more quickly your baby will adjust to the position.

If your baby is used to sleeping on his/her stomach, it may take a while to get used to it, but rest assured—he/she will. Soon your baby will think it is natural. You can also use a pacifier to calm your baby and help him/her go to sleep. Research suggests that pacifiers help reduce risk too.

**Is it okay if my baby sleeps on his/her side?**

Babies placed to sleep on their sides are at increased risk for infant sleep-related death. For this reason, babies must always sleep on their backs—the position associated with the lowest risk.

### Won’t my baby choke if he/she sleeps on his/her back?

Many parents believe that babies are more likely to choke if they sleep on their back. This is not true. In fact, your baby is LESS likely to choke on his/her back, because in that position the windpipe (trachea) is above the food tube (esophagus). Anything that is spit up from the stomach has to go against gravity to be inhaled into the windpipe. A healthy baby generally will turn his/her head so that spit up goes out of the mouth- not back down the throat.



When your baby is on his/her stomach, anything spit up can block the windpipe and cause choking or breathing problems.

**What if my baby rolls onto his/her stomach during sleep? Do I need to put my baby in the back sleep position again if this happens?**

No. Rolling over is an important and natural part of your baby's growth. Most babies start rolling over on their own around 4 to 6 months of age. Typically around this age, babies have stronger neck muscles and are able to move if they can’t breathe. If your baby rolls over on his/her own during sleep, you do not need to turn the baby over onto his/her back. The important thing is that your baby starts every sleep time alone on his/her back and in a crib to reduce the risk of suffocating while sleeping, and that there is no soft, loose bedding in the baby's sleep area.

### Doesn’t my baby need to spend time on his/her tummy?

Yes! You should provide ‘tummy time’ when your baby is awake and being watched. This will help strengthen your baby’s neck and arm muscles and prevent flat spots on the back of your baby’s head.

For more information on 'tummy time,' go to [http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Back-to-Sleep-Tummy-to-Play](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Back-to-Sleep-Tummy-to-Play.aspx?nfstatus=401&nftoken=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000&nfstatusdescription=ERROR%3a+No+local+token)

**Will my baby get flat spots on the back of the head from sleeping on his/her back?**

When a baby is on their back too often or for too long a time, pressure on the same part of the baby's head can cause flat spots. Such flat spots are usually not dangerous and typically go away on their own once the baby starts sitting up. The flat spots also are not linked to long-term problems with head shape. Making sure your baby gets enough ‘Tummy Time’ while awake is one way to help prevent these flat spots.

[**When can I stop placing a baby to sleep on his/her back?**](http://healthybabiesbaltimore.com/parents-and-caregivers/safe-sleep)

You should always place your baby to sleep on his/her back. Infant sleep-related deaths occur from birth to 1 year old. If your baby is able to roll over on his/her own you don’t need to roll them back on his/her back.

**Why shouldn't I use crib bumpers in my baby's sleep area?**

Bumper pads and similar products that attach to crib slats or sides are frequently used with the thought of protecting infants from injury. However, evidence does not support using crib bumpers to prevent injury. In fact, crib bumpers can cause serious injuries or death. Keeping crib bumpers out of your baby's sleep area is the best way to avoid these dangers.

Before crib safety was regulated, the spacing between the slats of the crib sides could be any width, which posed a danger to infants if they were too wide. Parents and caregivers used padded crib bumpers to protect infants. Now that cribs must meet safety standards, the slats don’t pose the same dangers. As a result, the bumpers are no longer needed.

[**Where do I go to get more information on safe sleep?**](http://healthybabiesbaltimore.com/parents-and-caregivers/safe-sleep)

Learn how to create a safe sleep environment for your baby by visiting [www.thecapcenter.org](http://www.thecapcenter.org). You can also learn about free parent workshops and how to get a free crib by contacting Safe Sleep Baby at 916-244-1900.

