

Responding to questions and comments about SIDS and safe sleep:

How do *you* reply if *they* say...



My kids all slept on their tummies and they survived.

And thank goodness, right?... We've learned a lot about SIDS in the past ten to fifteen years. We now know tummy sleeping puts babies at a high risk for SIDS. **In addition, since the back to sleep campaign, the number of SIDS deaths has been reduced by 50%.** Why take the chance?

Babies sleep better on their tummies.

Babies often sleep more deeply when they're on their tummies, but that's what is dangerous... Sometimes they don't ever wake up. Some babies don't have the built-in ability to arouse themselves from a deep sleep, especially if they're overheated while sleeping on their tummies.

But my baby won't sleep on her back – I've tried.

Back sleeping is a learned habit. Babies can be taught to sleep on their backs, in most cases in less than a week. I know you're tired and you want your baby to sleep, but it will be worth the effort to teach her.

Won't my baby choke on spit-up while sleeping on his back?

Babies are not at a higher risk for choking while sleeping on their backs. In fact, they swallow more often which helps prevent choking.

I just hold my baby through the night so I can stop anything from happening.

I let my baby sleep on his tummy while I'm watching him.

I just lay down with my grandchild for naps in my bed so I can watch her.

I know you're trying to protect your baby by doing this, but it actually increases the chances of SIDS. Once SIDS starts, it can't be stopped, so it's better to not put the baby at risk by never sleeping with him, letting him sleep on his tummy or putting him in an adult bed.

The baby's mother has asked me to only put him to sleep in his car seat because she's afraid if he sleeps lying down, in a crib, he might die of SIDS.

My doctor told me to put my baby to sleep in her car seat and put the seat in her crib.

Car seats were only meant to restrain a baby in the car **and are not encouraged to be used for routine sleep.** They were not designed for safe sleeping. Babies can easily overheat in a car seat, putting them at a greater risk for SIDS. Sleeping sitting up will not prevent SIDS, and it is also not healthy for a small baby's spine and neck development.

My baby's hands always feel so cold – I have to dress him this warm.

Babies' hands and feet often feel cold even though they are perfectly warm. A better measure of a baby's warmth is to feel his tummy. And babies can actually tolerate a much cooler temperature than we realize. Keeping **baby's room comfortable to a lightly clothed adult is ideal** for a baby. Over-bundling, over-dressing and over-heating a baby puts him or her at a higher risk for SIDS.

We just put the baby between us in bed so we can hear her breathing.

Babies belong in bed with their parents – that's how nature intended it.

Maybe nature did intend it that way, but nature did not take into account our soft mattresses, layers of sheets and blankets, fluffy pillows and comforters. Overheating and rebreathing are a huge risk in adult beds. When two adults put a baby between them in bed, they create a heat tunnel with their body heat. This is very risky. Babies also scoot to the warmest place which is usually under mom or dad, under a blanket, or up under a pillow. This puts the baby at a great risk for rebreathing or accidental suffocation.

Even if you sleep on a firm mattress, with only a tight-fitting bottom sheet and no other bedding present, you are putting the baby and mom at risk for overlaying.

Most adults would rather not deprive themselves of the sleeping comforts they've become accustomed to and find it easier to put the baby's bed close to them in the same room than to give up their pillows and blankets. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies sleep in the same room with their parents, on a separate safe sleep surface. Room share – don't bed share!

I've been watching babies for years – we keep them asleep in the daycare better on their tummies.

Why risk the convenience of keeping a baby asleep longer in daycare when we know that tummy sleeping puts a baby at such a high risk for SIDS? I know you would feel awful if something happened to one of those babies.

The baby's mother told me to put a blanket over his face so he sleeps better.

Never put anything over a baby's face. The baby can rebreathe or accidentally suffocate this way. Even if the mother suggests it, do not put yourself or the baby at this risk.

My doctor told me we have to have bumper pads in the crib until our baby is 6 months old.

Back in the days when cribs were made with the side slats many inches apart, bumper pads were very important to keep a baby from falling out of the crib (literally). Now that cribs are so much safer, bumper pads are no longer needed. You do not need to worry about your baby bumping her head and hurting her soft spot – that would take ramming force – something your baby won't be able to muster for quite some time...

Babies can scoot up against bumper pads and possibly over-heat or rebreathe into them. In fact, bumper pads are a decorative hazard. Save your money by not buying a crib set and put the money toward a good, firm mattress. All you should have inside the bed is a tight-fitting sheet.

But the nurses used blankets and hats in the hospital...

In the first few hours after your baby was born, while he was adjusting to the world outside the womb, he needed a little help to regulate his temperature and feel secure. By the time your healthy baby was ready to head home, these measures are no longer necessary.

I don't want my baby to get a flat head by sleeping on her back.

Babies only need to be on their backs while they are sleeping. Hold your baby as much as you can while she is awake. Supervised play time on her tummy is great, too. Remember that time spent in car seats, baby seats, swings, etc. is the same as having your baby lying on her back. Try to get her out of these positions as often as possible while she is awake and supervised.

Babies who do develop a flat spot usually outgrow this by age 6 to 12 months. There is a very rare medical condition when flat heads become a risk – consult your doctor if you are concerned.



If you are having a tough time answering a question or comment a parent or caregiver has for you, or if you were asked an interesting question and you'd like to share, send it to the Iowa SIDS Foundation. We can help you with a response and we'll add the question to this collection.

Email: info@iowasids.org

Mail: Iowa SIDS Foundation
2962 99th St. Suite 3
Urbandale, IA 50322