



SAFER SLEEP FOR YOUR BABY

Simple steps to reduce the risk of SIDS

Maddy Thompson
Balanced Bedtime sleep consultancy
Level 6 OCN Paediatric Sleep Practitioner
www.BalancedBedtime.co.uk



Every sleep matters

When you're caring for a new baby, it can feel like everyone has different advice about sleep. It can be overwhelming, especially when you're already exhausted.

The good news is that there are a few simple, evidence-based steps that can help reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and create the safest possible sleep environment for your baby.

What is SIDS?

SIDS (previously known as cot death) is the sudden and unexplained death of a baby under one year of age. Although SIDS is rare, sadly more than 200 babies die from it each year in the UK, with around 9 out of 10 deaths occurring before six months of age.

No one knows exactly what causes SIDS, but following safer sleep guidance has been shown to significantly reduce the risk.

The Foundations of Safer Sleep

Three of the most important ways to reduce the risk of SIDS are to:



- Always place your baby on their back for every sleep.
- Give your baby their own separate, clear sleep space with a firm, flat sleep surface.
- Keep your baby in the same room as you for every sleep, day and night, for at least the first six months.

Always Place Your Baby on Their Back

Always place your baby on their back for every sleep, both during the day and at night.

Babies who sleep on their backs have a much lower risk of SIDS than babies placed on their side or tummy. Once your baby can roll independently, you don't need to keep turning them back throughout the night, but you should always place them on their back when putting them down to sleep.

Create a Clear, Safe Sleep Space

Use:



- A **firm, flat** mattress that fits the cot properly.
- A **waterproof** mattress protector.
- A **fitted** sheet.
- A **cot, Moses basket or bedside crib**, in the **same room** as you.
- If you're using blankets rather than a baby sleeping bag, place your baby with their **feet at the foot of the cot** and tuck blankets in no higher than shoulder level.
- Keep your baby's sleep space **clear**

Avoid:



- Duvets and quilts
- Pillows
- Cot bumpers
- Baby nests or sleep positioners
- Soft toys
- Loose blankets that could cover your baby's face
- Keep the cot away from radiators, heaters, direct sunlight and blind cords.

Keep Your Baby Comfortably Cool

Babies don't need to be overly wrapped up to stay warm.

Aim for a room temperature between **16–20°C**.

Dress your baby in **light layers** suitable for the room temperature. If using a baby sleeping bag, make sure it is the **correct size** for your baby and the **appropriate tog** rating for the room temperature.

Avoid:



- Heavy bedding
- Hats indoors during sleep
- Over-bundling

If your baby's chest or the back of their neck feels hot or sweaty, remove a layer of clothing.

Keep Your Baby Smoke Free

Keeping your baby in a smoke-free environment is one of the most important ways to reduce the risk of SIDS.

Smoking during pregnancy or after birth significantly increases the risk of SIDS. Keep your home and car smoke free, and ask visitors not to smoke around your baby. If you or anyone else smokes, never share a bed with your baby, even if you don't smoke in the bedroom.

Share a Room

Keeping your baby in the **same room** as you for **every sleep, day and night**, for at least the first **six months** has been shown to reduce the risk of SIDS.

If your baby was born prematurely or has additional medical needs, your neonatal or healthcare team may provide individual safer sleep advice. Always follow the guidance they provide.

If You Choose to Share a Bed

Some parents may choose to bed share or may fall asleep while feeding their baby. Understanding how to reduce the risks can help you make informed decisions.

If your baby is in your bed:



- Use a firm, flat mattress.
- Keep pillows, duvets and blankets away from your baby's head.
- Make sure your baby's head remains uncovered.
- Never leave your baby alone in an adult bed.
- Make sure your baby cannot fall out of bed or become trapped between the mattress and the wall, headboard or furniture.
- Keep other children and pets out of the bed.
- Never swaddle your baby when bed sharing.

Never share a bed if:



- You or your partner smoke, even if you don't smoke in the bedroom.
- You or your partner have consumed alcohol.
- Either of you has taken medication or drugs that make you feel sleepy or less aware.
- Your baby was born prematurely or had a low birth weight.

Never Sleep with Your Baby on a Sofa or Armchair

Sleeping with your baby on a sofa or armchair carries a significantly higher risk of SIDS and accidental suffocation, even if you don't intend to fall asleep.

If you think you may fall asleep while feeding your baby, it's much safer to **move to a safer sleep space on a bed** than to remain on a sofa or armchair.

Breastfeeding and Dummies

Breastfeeding is associated with a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Some families choose to use a **dummy** at sleep times. Research suggests this may reduce the risk of SIDS, although using a dummy is a personal choice.

If you choose to use a dummy and are breastfeeding, it is generally recommended to wait until breastfeeding is well established (usually around four to six weeks) before introducing one. If your baby does not want a dummy, there is no need to encourage them to use one. If the dummy falls out once your baby is asleep, you do not need to put it back in.

Remember

Safer sleep is about making informed choices as often as you can. Every nap and every night's sleep is another opportunity to reduce risk.



If your routine doesn't always go to plan, you're not alone. Parenting is full of unexpected moments, and support is always available.

If you're ever unsure about your baby's sleep or have questions about safer sleep guidance, speak to your health visitor, midwife or GP.

Need Personalised Support?

Every baby's sleep journey is unique.

If you're struggling with frequent night waking, naps, bedtime routines or you're unsure whether your baby's sleep is developing as expected, I offer **personalised support** to help you understand what's happening and create a **safe, responsive sleep plan** tailored to your family.

Helpful Resources

The Lullaby Trust

NHS Safer Sleep Guidance

BASIS (Baby Sleep Information Source) – Bed-sharing information

Baby Sling Safety (T.I.C.K.S. Guidelines)



Maddy Thompson
Sleep Practitioner
Balanced Bedtime sleep consultancy

Phone: +44 7345 240195
Email: Maddy@BalancedBedtimeSC.co.uk
Instagram: [balancedbedtimesc](https://www.instagram.com/balancedbedtimesc)
Tiktok: [@balancedbedtimesc](https://www.tiktok.com/@balancedbedtimesc)

Social Worker & Level 6 OCN Paediatric Sleep Practitioner

www.BalancedBedtime.co.uk

