

CO-SLEEPING vs. BED SHARING vs. ROOM SHARING

Revised July 2009

Co-sleeping is a term used by many as an umbrella for anything from bed sharing to room sharing and anything in between. It is a vague term that is very confusing for parents. In order to help guide parents in making important decisions about where and how their baby will sleep, First Candle uses two very distinct terms — room sharing and bed sharing. Bed sharing is the practice of falling asleep on the same surface as your baby. This practice can be very dangerous and increases the baby's risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), suffocation and accidents during sleep.

Room sharing is the practice of placing babies to sleep near the adult bed, but in his or her own separate space. This protects the baby AND helps make breastfeeding easier. Breastfeeding and bonding in bed are fine, but when it's time to go to sleep parents and caregivers should place the baby alongside the bed in his or her own separate space.

If we could gain widespread understanding and acceptance of room sharing instead of bed sharing, we could literally save thousands of precious lives each year for generations to come. First Candle reminds all parents and caregivers how to create a “safe sleep zone” for their baby:

- Always place your baby on his or her back at naptime and nighttime.
- Use a crib that meets current safety standards with a firm mattress that fits snugly in the crib. The mattress should be covered with only a tight-fitting crib sheet. For more information on using a product other than a crib for your sleeping baby, visit www.firstcandle.org.
- Remove all soft, loose or fluffy bedding or other items from the baby's sleep area. This includes pillows, comforters, blankets, soft or pillow-like bumpers, stuffed animals and other soft items.
- Instead of loose blankets, use a wearable blanket or sleeper to keep your baby warm and safe.
- Room share – don't bed share!