

Tips for Parents & Caregivers: Help Your Baby Survive & Thrive

As recommended by First Candle/SIDS Alliance, the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Each year, more than 4 million American families welcome a new baby into their home. For many, following these ten simple steps may make the difference between life and death for their baby. First Candle/SIDS Alliance encourages parents, grandparents, child care providers and other caregivers to adhere to these important, life-saving messages:

- Always place babies to sleep on their **BACK** at nap and nighttime. Side and tummy sleep positions are not safe and should not be used. Make sure everyone that cares for your baby understands this.
- Babies should not sleep in adult beds or on sofas. Bring baby into bed with you for feeding and bonding - but to provide the greatest protection, place the baby in a crib or other separate safe sleep area along side the bed before going to sleep. Every year, hundreds of babies die of SIDS and accidental suffocation while sleeping with a parent or others. Do not bring your baby into bed with you at all if you are overly tired, on medication or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- You should not smoke while you are pregnant and babies should not be exposed to second-hand smoke after they are born. Babies exposed to tobacco during pregnancy are two to three times more likely to die of SIDS. Second-hand smoke also puts your baby at increased risk for SIDS and other respiratory illnesses.
- For sleep, use a safety-approved crib with a firm, tight fitting mattress covered by only a sheet. There should be nothing else in the crib.
- Soft materials or objects such as quilts, comforters or sheepskins should not be placed under a sleeping baby and sofas, chairs and adult beds (including waterbeds) should be avoided.
- Do not use loose blankets in a baby's crib. Layer clothing or use a wearable blanket or other type sleeper to keep babies warm AND safe during sleep.
- Remove all soft bedding and other soft items from the crib when baby goes to sleep. This includes blankets, quilts, comforters, pillows and stuffed toys. Soft or pillow-like bumper pads should not be used. If bumpers are used, they should be thin, firm and securely tied.
- Encourage babies to use a pacifier at nap and nighttime for the first year. The evidence that pacifier use can reduce the risk of SIDS far outweighs the evidence that pacifier use inhibits breastfeeding or causes long-term dental complications. Use the following guidelines:
 - Breastfed infants should not be offered a pacifier until one month of age to ensure that breastfeeding is firmly established.
 - Pacifiers do not need to be reinserted once the baby falls asleep.
 - Pacifiers should not be coated in any sweet solution.
 - Do not use a string or other device to attach pacifiers around your baby's neck or to clothing.
- Take care not to overheat babies with too much clothing or too warm of room temperature. Layer clothing as needed (no blankets!) and keep room temperature at a level that would be comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Educate everyone you know who takes care of babies about these important safety tips!

Other Tips to Maximize Your Baby's Health:

- Maintain good prenatal care for you and your unborn baby, including proper nutrition and frequent medical checkups.
- Breastfeed exclusively for at least the first six months if at all possible. Breastfeeding has been shown to be good for babies by building their immunity against illness and infections, in addition to other benefits.
- Follow proper immunization schedules. The risk of leaving a baby unprotected is 1,000 times greater than any risk posed by using the vaccines.
- Ensure plenty of “tummy time” for babies while they are awake and closely supervised. This will strengthen upper body muscles that are not used as much as a result of sleeping on their back and minimize the effects of positional plagiocephaly (flat heads). Do not leave babies unattended during tummy-time. If they become tired or sleepy, move them to the crib and place them on their back.
- To further minimize the potential for positional plagiocephaly (flat heads), alternate placement of the baby’s head at opposite ends of the crib for sleep and in opposite arms for feeding. Experts agree that routine positional plagiocephaly corrects itself once the baby is rolling around and crawling.

While we are confident that following these recommendations will save lives, we know that following them faithfully will not prevent all sudden infant deaths. Things can still go wrong even when parents do everything right.

First Candle is the nations leading organization dedicated to infant health and survival during the prenatal period through age two with programs of research, education and advocacy, while at the same time providing compassionate grief support to those affected by an infant death.

For more information please call 1.800.221.7437 or visit www.firstcandle.org