



Tips for Parents and Caregivers: Helping Your Baby Survive and Thrive

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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 your baby on his or her **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 your baby into bed with you for breastfeeding and bonding - but to protect your baby, place them in a crib or other separate safe sleep area along side your 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.
- Do not smoke while you are pregnant or allow anyone to smoke around your baby after he or she is 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.
- Use a safety-approved crib with a firm, tight fitting mattress covered by only a sheet when placing your baby to sleep.
- 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.
- Layer clothing or use an infant sleep sack instead of loose blankets in your baby's crib. This will keep your baby warm AND safe.
- Remove all soft bedding and other soft items from the crib when your 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 your baby to use a pacifier at nap and nighttime for the first year. The evidence on pacifier use to reduce the risk of SIDS is compelling; the evidence that pacifier use inhibits breastfeeding or causes dental complications is not. 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 what would be comfortable for a lightly clothed adult..
 - Educate everyone who takes care of your baby 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 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 for your baby. 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 your baby 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 your baby 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, alternate placement of your 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.