Preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the unexplained death of an infant younger than one year old. Most SIDS deaths happen between 2 months and 4 mon ths of age.

What is especially frightening is no one is certain what causes it. Recent studies suggest a deficiency in serotonin. This brain chemical helps regulate breathing, temperature, sleeping, and other functions.

What is clear is that certain babies are at greater risk. African-American and Native-American babies die from SIDs at a higher rate compared to white babies. As a parent or caregiver for a baby, there are steps you can take to prevent SIDs:

- **Always place babies on their backs for naps and to sleep –** Babies who sleep on their stomachs or sides are at higher risk for SIDS.
- **Place your baby in a safety approved crib on a firm mattress covered with a fitted sheet –** Never place a baby to sleep on a pillow, sofa, soft mattress, waterbed or other soft surface.
- **Keep soft toys, stuffed animals and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area –** Don't use pillows, blankets or quilts in your baby's sleep area.
- **Keep your baby from overheating during sleep –** Make sure the baby's face and head stay uncovered. Dress your baby in light sleep clothing. The room temperature should be comfortable for an adult.
- **Make sure no one smokes around your baby.**
- **Consider using a clean, dry pacifier when laying your baby down to sleep.**

Back-sleeping has lowered the rate of SIDS. Reduce your baby's chances of SIDS even more by not sharing your bed.

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800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline