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## Safe Sleep: An Important Message for Parents and Caregivers

Welcoming a new baby into the family is an incredible, life-changing adventure. While this journey brings immense joy and excitement, knowing the serious risks babies face when sleeping is crucial. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, every year around 3,500 babies in the United States die suddenly and unexpectedly while sleeping. Most of these tragic deaths are due to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or accidental deaths from suffocation or strangulation. While there is no guaranteed way to prevent SIDS, there are things that parents and caregivers can do to reduce the risks dramatically.

Follow the ABCDs of safe sleep for babies:

- **A** is for **alone**. Babies should always sleep alone in their crib, bassinet, or portable crib. Be sure the sleeping area has no toys, soft bedding, blankets, or pillows.
- **B** is for **back**. Place babies on their backs to sleep. Do this during naps and at night. Studies show this is the best way to reduce the risk of SIDS or other sleep-related causes of infant death. Don't put a baby on their side or stomach to sleep.
- **C** is for **crib**. Use a safe sleep surface. Babies should sleep on a firm, flat surface. Don't use one that is at an angle or inclined. Safe examples are a crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that follows the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Visit [cpsc.gov](http://cpsc.gov) to make sure the product has not been recalled. Don't use broken cribs or cribs with missing instructions or missing parts.
- **D** is for **don't smoke**. Do not allow anyone to smoke or use nicotine around your baby. Avoiding smoke includes cigarettes, marijuana, or vaping. Exposure to secondhand smoke significantly increases the risk of SIDS.

Beyond the ABCDs, the American Academy of Pediatrics offers additional recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths. Before your baby is born, get routine prenatal care and avoid alcohol, marijuana, opioids, and illicit drugs during pregnancy and after the baby is born. Instead of sharing a bed, share the room with your baby for at least the first six months, and place the crib, bassinet, or portable crib near your bed. This practice can reduce SIDS risk by up to 50 percent. Feed your baby breast milk. Research shows human milk reduces the risk of SIDS.

For more information on safe sleep, ask your pediatrician, visit [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org), or contact Michelle Broxterman at [mbroxterman@ksu.edu](mailto:mbroxterman@ksu.edu), (620)724-8233

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