



CONSUMER INFORMATION

JANUARY 2008

SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES FOR INFANTS

The issue:

The safest place for an infant to sleep is alone in a crib. Infants and young children should never be placed to sleep on unsuitable surfaces, such as a standard bed, water bed, air mattress, sofa, futon or armchair.

Products, such as carriages, strollers, car seats, infant swings, bouncers, or playpens, are not intended for an infant to sleep in and should not be used for extended periods of time.

Sleep-related hazards include:

Bed sharing

Bed sharing is when an adult or another child sleeps on the same surface as an infant.

- Caregivers may believe that bed sharing will reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) however, there is no evidence of this. Research shows that the risk of SIDS is higher if the person sharing a bed with an infant is a smoker, very tired, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.¹
- Infants can become entrapped between objects such as the sleeping surface, the body of the parent or caregiver, the wall and other objects.
- Infants sleeping on an elevated surface can fall and be seriously injured.
- Infants can suffocate in soft bedding materials, such as pillows or comforters.

1. Canadian Paediatric Society.

Playpens:

Since playpens do not meet the same safety requirements and are not as durable as cribs, they are not designed to be used as a sleep surface.

- Do not leave an infant sleeping in a playpen for extended periods of time.
- If a change table or bassinet is provided as an attachment for the playpen, never place a baby in the playpen while the change table or bassinet attachment is still in place.
- Do not add blankets, pillows or an extra mattress to a playpen. The use of these items could lead to suffocation.
- Check that the mattress pad is firm. Mattress pads that are too soft or worn down in any area could create a suffocation hazard.

Cribs:

A crib that meets current Canadian safety regulations is the safest place for an infant to sleep. A crib can be used until there is a possibility that the child could climb out on their own or when they are taller than 90 cm (usually when the child is between the ages of 18-24 months). A cradle is a safe place for an infant to sleep until they can sit-up on their own (usually by the time the child reaches 6 months of age).

To ensure that a crib is safe for a sleeping infant:

- Do not use a crib made before September 1986 as it does not meet current safety regulations.
- Avoid the use of soft objects, such as pillows, plush toys, sleep positioners, comforters, bumper pads, lambskins and similar products as they can pose a suffocation risk.
- Check that the crib mattress is firm and tight-fitting. The space between the mattress and the sides of the crib should not be more than 3 cm. The mattress should not be more than 15 cm thick.
- Do not modify a crib in any way. Always follow manufacturer's instructions for assembling and using the crib.
- After placing the baby in the crib, ensure the sides are up and locked securely in position.

- Do not place cords, straps or similar items, in or near a crib, as they could become wrapped around a child's neck. Keep the crib away from windows or patio doors where a child can reach a blind or curtain cord as these items could also cause strangulation.

General Safe Sleep Tips:

- Infants should be placed on their backs to sleep.
- Never allow an infant to sleep on the same surface as an adult or another child.
- Do not allow an infant to sleep in a stroller, swing, bouncer or car seat for extended periods of time.
- When travelling, use a hard-sided portable crib instead of a playpen to place an infant to sleep.
- Never place a child younger than 2 years of age on a bed fitted with a portable bed rail.
- Children under the age of 6 should not sleep on the top bunk of bunk beds.

For more information:

Crib Safety (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/cribs-lits_enfants_e.html)

Is Your Child Safe?

(http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/index_e.html)

Danger! Children Can Strangle on Blind and Curtain Cords

(http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/blinds-cordons_e.html)

For further information or to report an injury or complaint, please contact Health Canada's Consumer Product Safety program at 1-866-662-0666 or CPS-SPC@hc-sc.gc.ca, or visit the Consumer Product Safety (CPS) section of Health Canada's Web site at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cps.

How can I keep my baby safe when she is sleeping?

Place your baby on her back to sleep. Put your baby in her crib, next to your bed, for the first six months.

Your baby should sleep in a crib until she is at least 12 months old.

Make sure the crib:

- Has a stamp showing it was made after September 1986; and
- Meets Health Canada's safety standards.

Ensure that the crib's mattress is:

- Firm;
- Flat;
- Tight fitting; and
- Covered with a tight-fitting crib sheet.

Remove all pillows and pillow-like items from your baby's crib, including:

- Thick coverings such as comforters or duvets;
- Soft bedding (including sheepskin);
- Stuffed toys;
- Baby positioners or foam wedges; and bumper pads.



Make sure your home and your car are always smoke-free, and only choose a child-care place that is also always smoke-free.

Dress your baby in a sleeper. Cover him with a thin blanket that you can tuck in under his arms. If you choose to swaddle your baby, wrap him lightly. Make sure his head and neck remain uncovered.

Keep your baby's head uncovered at all times while she is sleeping.

Keep the room temperature not too warm or too cold.

Tell your sleep partner if you plan to feed your baby in your bed. After feeding your baby, place your baby to sleep in his crib.

Remember:

Babies should always be put to sleep on their back. Never put your baby to sleep on her side or her tummy. Once your baby is older and can turn over on her own, she may sleep in whatever position she wants, in her crib.

You should never sleep with your baby on a sofa or an armchair.

Tell others who care for your baby how to keep your baby safe while sleeping.

Adult beds are not a safe place for babies to sleep. Babies are safest in their own crib.

When your baby is awake and you are watching her, place her on her tummy to play.

Unsafe sleep situations for your baby:

Do **not** let your baby sleep on:

- an adult bed;
- pillow;
- cushion;
- waterbed;
- air mattress;
- sofa;
- futon;
- recliner;
- armchair; or
- any makeshift bed.

Do **not** feed your baby in your bed if you:

- smoke in bed;
- are very tired;
- take medication that may make you sleepy; or
- have consumed alcohol.



Do not:

- replace your baby's crib with a car seat or baby seat;
- place your baby's crib near windows, curtains, blind cords, lamps, electric plugs, or extension cords;
- place anything around your baby's neck when she is sleeping, such as a bib, necklace, or a pacifier on a cord;
- leave a bottle in your baby's crib; or
- allow anyone, including other children or family pets, to sleep with your baby.

It is **unsafe** for your baby to sleep with you or anyone else, at any time. Your baby is more likely to be harmed if that person is:

- sick;
- very tired;
- has taken medication that may make them sleepy;
- has been drinking alcohol; or
- smoking in bed.

Why is it unsafe to lie down or sleep with my baby on a sofa or a bed?

Your baby may:

- fall out of the bed or off the sofa;
- become trapped in the cushions, or between the wall and the bed;
- become overheated;
- smother in the cushions, pillows, comforters, or soft bedding, or get his head covered by the bedding;
- get tangled up in the bedding, your pajamas, or your long hair
- die from SIDS if you or your sleep partner smoke

For more information, call Ottawa Public Health Information
at **613-580-6744** / TTY: 613-580-9656