

**6. Do not allow your baby to get too warm, or overheat, during sleep.**

A baby with too much clothing, too heavy bedding, or too warm a room has an increased risk of SIDS, particularly if the baby already has a fever.

An overheated baby is more likely to go into a deep sleep from which it is difficult to wake.

Set your home thermostat to 70 degrees, and dress your baby in as much or as little as you would wear. For babies that are not yet 5 pounds, add one layer more than you would wear.



**7. Talk to childcare providers, grandparents, babysitters and caregivers about the risk factors associated with SIDS.**

Twenty percent of babies who die of SIDS do so while in the care of a childcare provider. This often occurs because the babysitter doesn't know about the importance of putting babies on their backs.

Consistency of sleep position is an essential component of SIDS risk reduction. Tell all caretakers that you want your baby to sleep on his/ her back, even at naptime



Finally, at home when your infant is awake and being closely observed, "tummy time" is recommended. Awake time on the stomach will prevent flat spots from developing on the back of your baby's head and it will help with the motor development of your baby's upper body. If your baby falls asleep during "tummy time" turn the baby gently on to his/her back and follow the guidelines above.



**For additional information on reducing the risk of SIDS and other infant safety measures, contact Sudden Infant Death Services of the Mid-Atlantic at 703-933-9100  
Or email [sidsma27@aol.com](mailto:sidsma27@aol.com)  
[www.sidsma.org](http://www.sidsma.org)**

## Safe Sleep for Your Baby



In the NICU our goal is for you premature baby to grow into a healthy child.

Following discharge, you should follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations for infant sleep. These recommendations are intended to reduce your baby's risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Follow these recommendations unless your infant's doctor has given you instructions regarding a different sleep position medically needed by your infant.

SIDS is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation. SIDS is one of the leading causes of death in infants under 12 months of age.

Premature infants and low birth weight infants are at an increased risk for SIDS. However, following the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations for infant sleep may reduce your baby's risk. Your baby is now ready to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS. As a result, we will be changing

some of our practices here, in the NICU, to help prepare your baby for home. While many premature infants benefit greatly from sleeping on their stomachs or being "nested" with soft bedding early in their hospitalization, your baby no longer needs these interventions. While these practices may be appropriate for a premature baby in the NICU, they can be unsafe at home.

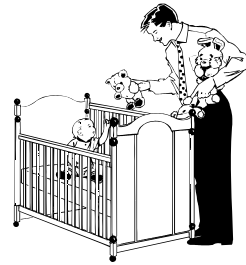
Over the next week or so, your baby's care will be transitioned to follow the guidelines below. Adapting to this care will be a gradual process. Our goal is that your baby's care will be adapted to follow all of these guidelines prior to discharge from the hospital.

Congratulations! Your baby is taking the first steps towards going home. Please become familiar with the following guidelines and keep them in mind when caring for your child. If you have any questions, please ask your baby's nurse or doctor.

### **1. Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, even for naps.**

Since 1992, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that babies be placed to sleep on their backs to reduce the risk of SIDS. Since then, the SIDS rate has decreased by 50%.

Stomach sleeping has been shown to increase the risk of SIDS. Babies on their stomachs are more likely to overheat, to rebreathe carbon dioxide, and to have an increased pool of nasal secretions.



### **2. Place your baby on a firm mattress in a safety-approved crib or bassinet.**

Beware of second-hand, hand-me-down, or family heirloom cribs, cradles, mattresses or other bedding items that may not meet current safety standards.

Bed sharing and sofa sharing are not recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics or the National SIDS Alliance. When parents bed share with a baby, there is a risk of rolling over onto the infant, or the infant may become trapped in bed linens and suffocate.

### **3. Remove soft, fluffy bedding and stuffed toys from your baby's sleep area.**

Suffocation by carbon dioxide is associated with soft bedding because the infant can get his/ her face against it and rebreathe carbon dioxide.

Avoid using loose blankets, pillows, sheepskins or comforters. Also avoid the use of bumper pads, wedges, stuffed animals and toys in your baby's sleeping area.

If you use a blanket, it should be a thin one and it should be tucked around the mattress so it reaches only as far as your baby's chest. A HALO SleepSack is a good alternative to a blanket, and can be purchased from SIDS Mid-Atlantic.

### **4. Make certain that your baby's head and face remain uncovered during sleep.**

Babies are at an increased risk for SIDS if their head becomes covered during sleep. Swaddling a baby's head can lead to overheating and covering a baby's face can lead to suffocation.

Avoid using a blanket or other covering over your baby's face as a sun or weather screen, or to block out distractions or sounds while your baby is sleeping.

Babies should not wear hats while sleeping.

### **5. Never allow smoking around your baby.**



Smoking causes cell damage that can interfere with an infant's developing lungs and nervous system. It has been proven to disrupt a baby's ability to wake from sleep, which can increase the risk of SIDS. If you need help quitting smoking, contact SIDS Mid-Atlantic.