

## Helping Baby “Back To Sleep”

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Back to Sleep Campaign recommend that babies less than 1 year of age be placed on the back to sleep in order to lower the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Since the start of the Back to Sleep Campaign in 1994, the number of babies dying of SIDS has decreased by more than 50 percent. But many babies still sleep on the tummy or side, and babies are still dying of SIDS.

### Why does back sleeping help lower the risk of SIDS?

- When baby sleeps on her back, it should help to keep her mouth and nose unblocked, and her head uncovered so she breathes in clean, fresh air and does not overheat. This may be why the risk is lowered.
- Remember that the baby must be placed on the back for EVERY sleep—at night time and nap time.
- Placing a baby to sleep on the side is not as safe and is not advised.

**IMPORTANT:** The risk of SIDS is much higher in babies who are used to sleeping only on the back and are put to sleep on the tummy for the first time.

*Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age that remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history.*

—Willinger, James, and Catz.  
“Defining the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).”  
Pediatric Pathology 1991; 11(5): 677–84.



## Won't baby choke when sleeping on the back?

- Sometimes babies “spit up” when sleeping. Studies have shown that babies are NOT at risk of choking if they spit up when sleeping on the back.

## Isn't baby uncomfortable on her back?

- Some babies seem happier on their tummies. However, baby will adjust to sleeping on the back if you start placing her on the back for EVERY sleep as soon as she is born.
- Baby might just be fussy for other reasons, or not feeling well.

## What can I do to help baby fall asleep?

- Keep bedtime and naptime schedules the same every day, as much as possible.
- Most babies sleep well after a feeding and/or a bath. Hold baby to feed—do not give baby a bottle or sippy cup in the crib.
- Make sure baby's crib is away from loud noise. Keep things quiet for 1 hour before bedtime. Soft lighting helps baby get sleepy.
- Gently massage baby's belly, arms, and legs.
- Even babies like to hear a quiet story or song before bedtime.
- Consider using a pacifier when you place baby on the back for sleep (if baby is breastfed, wait until she is 1 month old or is used to breastfeeding).
- If baby spits out the pacifier after falling asleep, you do not need to put it back in her mouth.

## Baby won't sleep on her back. She just cries!

- Sing, hum, or play soft music. Even making a soft rhythmic sound (Shhhhhh) over and over will help calm the baby.
- Learn what baby is telling you when she cries—it might not be hunger. She might just need soothing, or a diaper change.
- If needed, walk baby in your arms, then place baby on her back in the crib when she is sleepy.
- If baby still cries, try and get advice from a friend or family member who has experience getting infants to sleep.
- Consider putting baby's crib or bassinet near your bed. This might be comforting for baby—and doctors say this can lower the risk of SIDS.

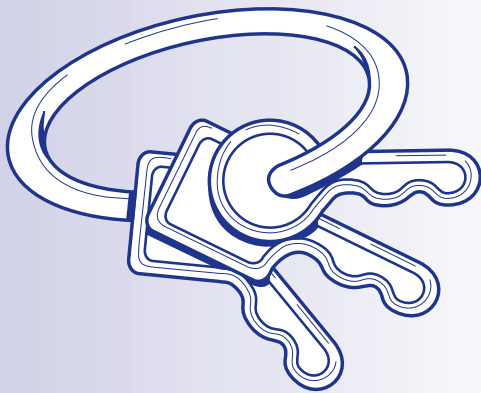
## What if baby rolls over from the back to her tummy or side?

- Always place baby on the back when you put her down for sleep.
- Once baby starts rolling and chooses her own sleep position, you do not need to keep turning her over on the back.
- When baby rolls, it is even more important that there is nothing else (blankets, soft toys) in the sleep area to get near her face.



## What if baby wakes up fussy during the night?

- If baby is only fussing (and not crying), wait a moment to make sure the baby is actually awake. Some babies fuss a bit during an “active phase” of sleep, and then fall back asleep.
- If baby wakes up and cries go to her as quickly as possible—that helps calm baby so she can fall asleep again.
- Hold and feed baby if she is hungry, and comfort baby before placing her on her back to sleep in her own crib or bassinet.
- It is best to wait at least 3 hours from the beginning of one feeding to the next feeding, and gradually increase the time between feedings over the next 6 to 9 months.
- Try not to play with baby during the night when she wakes up.



## Here are more ways to keep your baby safe while sleeping:

- After feeding and burping, place baby on her back in a crib or bassinet **next to your bed, instead of in your bed**. This is the safest place for baby to sleep.
- Baby should NEVER sleep on couches; chairs; recliners; waterbeds; soft surfaces such as pillows, cushions, sheepskins, or quilts; or any bed with another adult or child.
- Make sure that baby is not too warm. Keep the room at a temperature that feels comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Use light sleep clothing like a one-piece sleeper or wearable blanket, instead of loose blankets.
- Keep pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, soft or pillow-like bumper pads, and other soft objects out of baby’s crib or bassinet.
- Keep baby’s head uncovered during sleep.
- Don’t allow anyone to smoke around your baby.
- Talk to grandparents, relatives, friends, babysitters, and child care providers about safe sleep and what works best to help baby fall asleep on her back EVERY TIME. Talk to everyone who takes care of your baby to follow these important safe sleep rules.

We hope these tips will help baby  
(and you) to rest better!

**For more information contact:**

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**National  
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Helping to put the pieces together