



Safer Sleep for your Baby

Thankfully the number of sudden infant deaths has fallen by 82% since the “Back to Sleep” campaign in 1991. Sadly, 240 babies each year (that is 5 babies a week) still die suddenly and unexpectedly in the UK due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). This leaflet is to help you keep your baby safe.

While no single cause has been identified, there are a number of known risk factors and lots of simple ways that parents can make sure that their babies are sleeping as safely as possible.

The Lullaby Trust has produced guidance on safe sleeping practices for babies.

Their top 3 recommendations are:

1. Put babies on their **BACK** for every sleep
2. In a **CLEAR, FLAT SLEEP SPACE** in the same room as the carer
3. Keep them **SMOKE FREE**, day and night

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is known to reduce the risk of SIDS. The Department of Health and Social Care recommends breastfeeding for as long as possible, ideally exclusively for the first 6 months. After 6 months, breastfeeding is encouraged with the addition of suitable solid foods for as long as the mother and baby want to continue breastfeeding.

[More information on Page 2](#)

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 24/02/2022.

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Products you need for safe sleeping

The choice of sleeping products on the market can feel overwhelming – it's best to keep it simple. You need a Moses basket or cot for indoors and a pram for outdoors. Each one needs a firm flat mattress that is protected by an approved waterproof cover to keep it clean and dry. If you can afford it, a new one is recommended. You can use one from another child as long as it has been stored in a clean dry place, is in good condition and has no mould, rips or tears and is firm and flat.

Ensure the mattress fits the cot, pram or Moses basket properly with no gaps around the edges. Babies can quickly outgrow their Moses Basket. Once your baby becomes more active you will need to place them in a cot as they can tip the Moses Basket up or roll out of it and risk harming themselves. Caution needs to be used with the use of a Moses basket above the recommended age. At least one recent death recorded in the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) is attributed to risks such as rolling and subsequent entrapment. The use of pods, nests, hammocks, sleep positioners, cot bumpers, pillows, soft cushion or thick heavy bedding is unsafe and not recommended.

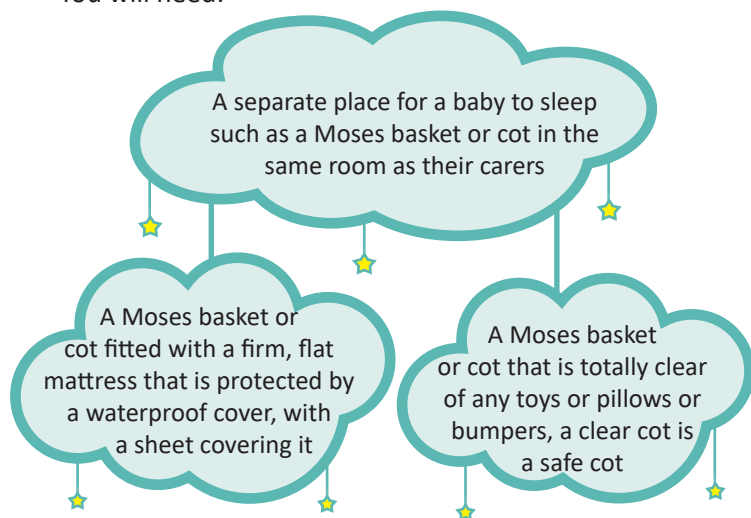
You may also need a suitable car seat.

The Sure Start Maternity Grant is available to help cover the costs of a new baby and is available to families living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland - more information available: <http://bit.ly/3t0Smaq>.

In Scotland, the grant is called the Best Start Grant. For more information about whether you qualify for, visit: <http://bit.ly/2X9BD7J>

The essentials - keep it simple, keep it safe

You will need:



Things to be aware of when choosing baby sleeping products

When choosing products for your baby, check the following:

- ✓ Does it meet British Standards? If so, it should say on the product itself, its packaging, instructions or website.
- ✓ Is the sleep surface firm? (baby's head should not sink in by more than a few millimetres, no matter how cute and cosy it looks)
- ✓ Is it entirely flat with no raised or cushioned areas?
- ✓ Does it have a waterproof cover that meets the standards?

British Standard does not mean that a product helps to reduce the chance of SIDS, it just guarantees a certain level of general safety (e.g., will not fall apart or set fire easily). You should also carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions for any product you buy and contact the manufacturer directly with any questions.

Advertising can be very misleading and not all products on the market are safe for babies. Research by The Lullaby Trust shows that 41% of parents have, or intend to buy, baby sleep nests and pods that do not meet safer sleep guidelines.

See this video link below by The Lullaby Trust on how to choose safe sleeping products: <https://bit.ly/2IzJBBn>

Sleeping position

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep, not on their front or side, unless there is medical advice to do otherwise.
- If a baby rolls onto their tummy, turn them back again. However, once they can roll from front to back, and back to their front again, you can leave them to find their own sleeping position.
- Babies need to sleep with their feet at the end of the cot, pram or Moses basket and always ensure their head and face are uncovered. Ensure they are not outgrowing the Moses Basket and can tip it up or roll out of it.
- Never sleep on a sofa or in an armchair with your baby as this greatly increases the risk of SIDS by 50 times.

[More information on Page 3](#)

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- Babies placed on their tummy to sleep have been found to be at 6 times greater risk of SIDS compared to a baby placed on their back. Side sleeping also increases the risk. No research has found any increased risk of choking for babies lying on their backs.
- Babies with reflux DO NOT need to be on their front. Families should seek medical advice if they feel the position their baby is sleeping in is affecting their health. This decision should not be made by families alone. Please see **iHV Parent Tips “How to help if your baby has reflux”**: <https://bit.ly/2PKi1WJ>

Room temperature

Make sure you use the right under-layers for your room temperature to help reduce the risk of overheating. Aim for the temperature in your baby’s room to be between 16-20°C.

Check your baby regularly to make sure they are not too hot. Feel their tummy or back of their neck rather than their hands or feet as these may be cooler. If your baby feels hot and sweaty, remove one or more layers of clothing, bedclothes or bedding. A useful tip is to check your baby whenever you feel hot or cold.

Slings

Use the TICKS guidance below, as recommended by Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), for baby carriers and slings to make sure a baby is breathing normally while being carried in a sling or carrier. **T.I.C.K.S** stands for:

T	ight
I	n view at all times
C	lose enough to kiss
K	eepest the chin off chest and
S	upported back

Car seats

Do not let your baby routinely sleep in a car seat when at home. When you arrive back from a journey, remove your baby from their car seat and place them in their cot or Moses basket.

On long car journeys, stop for breaks so your baby is not in the car seat for long periods (recommended maximum is no longer than 2 hours without a break) and make sure your baby is dressed in clothing suitable for the in-car temperature.

Swaddling

Swaddling may help some babies to settle and sleep for longer. If you do decide to swaddle your baby, ensure you do this safely. Swaddling should be done for each day and night-time sleep as part of a regular routine:



Dummies/pacifiers

Some research suggests that it is possible that using a dummy when putting a baby down to sleep could reduce the risk of SIDS. If you wish to use a dummy, then wait until breastfeeding is well established (about 4 weeks old).

- Stop giving a dummy to your baby to go to sleep between 6 and 12 months.
- Don't force your baby to take a dummy or put it back in if your baby spits it out.
- Don't use a neck cord.
- Don't put anything sweet on the dummy, and don't offer during awake time.
- Using an orthodontic (dental approved) dummy is best as it adapts to your baby's mouth shape.
- If you choose to use a dummy, make sure it is part of your baby's regular sleep routine.

See **The Lullaby Trust dummy fact sheet**:

<https://bit.ly/2Uod2bB>

BASIS – Baby Sleep Info Source: <http://bit.ly/3kTwhYK>

[More information on Page 4](#)

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The safest place for your baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you day and night.

Co-sleeping

Parents may choose to co-sleep with their babies, especially if breastfeeding. This means that their baby shares the same adult bed for most of the night, and not just to be comforted or fed.

If you do decide to co-sleep, it is important that you do this safely and are aware of the circumstances when you should not co-sleep. Bed sharing may increase the risk of SIDS. **Never sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby as this can increase the risk of SIDS by 50 times.**

It is important for you to know that there are some circumstances in which co-sleeping with your baby can be very dangerous:

- If either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom)
- If either you or your partner has drunk any alcohol or taken drugs (including medicines that may make you drowsy)
- If you are extremely tired
- If your baby was born premature (37 weeks or less)
- If your baby was born at a low weight (2½kg or 5½ pounds or less)

You must be especially careful when giving feeds that you are not in a position where you could both fall asleep in the bed together.

NOTE: Of the babies who died whilst bed sharing with an adult, 90% died in dangerous co-sleeping situations. The Lullaby Trust and the Department of Health and Social Care both clearly state the following:

Ensure there are no pillows, sheets, blankets or any other items in the bed with you that could obstruct your baby's breathing or cause them to overheat. A high proportion of infants who die as a result of SIDS are found with their head covered by loose bedding.

Health visitors are there to support and help you to make safe, informed choices that suit your family. Please feel able to discuss your safe sleeping concerns openly with your health visitor.

List of useful leaflets and resources

The Lullaby Trust

- How to choose safer sleeping products: <http://bit.ly/30oSowQ>
- Safe Product Guide: <https://bit.ly/3cglzrl>
- Dummies fact sheet: <https://bit.ly/2PFahoj>
- Swaddling your baby and using slings: <http://bit.ly/3c3zSO7>

Safe sleeping leaflets are available in a variety of different languages from The Lullaby Trust.

NHS Choices (2018)

- Reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS): <http://bit.ly/30I5bjG>

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