

**Understanding
safer sleeping
for babies**

“

An e-Book for childcare practitioners who care for babies and want to understand safer sleeping guidelines to widen knowledge and support prevention of SIDS.

Contents

SIDS.....	3
Cots and mattresses.....	4
Temperature.....	6
Blankets.....	8
Jewellery.....	9
Advice for parents / carers.....	10
Smoking and vaping.....	11
Contact us.....	13

SIDS

'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant where no cause is found after detailed post mortem.' (The Lullaby Trust)

SIDS is an important area to be aware of when caring for babies.

As early years educators, it is important that you use your platform to share your knowledge of safer sleeping guidelines with parents, carers, and other people who may care for babies, in order to spread awareness and support prevention of SIDS.

The cause of SIDS is not fully understood to date, but experts believe SIDS affects babies vulnerable to certain environmental stresses, such as cigarette smoke or getting tangled in bedding. Following current guidelines to ensure safer sleep practice for babies under 12 months can help to prevent SIDS.

Did you know?

According to NHS England: In the UK, around 200 babies die suddenly and unexpectedly every year. Infants born prematurely or with a low birthweight are at greater risk, and it tends to be slightly more common in baby boys.

Cots and mattresses

The guidelines below will help to prevent SIDS:

- Cots, travel cots, Moses baskets, and carrycots with a clean, firm mattress are the safest places for baby to sleep
- Pods and nests are 'on trend' and may seem like a safe alternative to a cot, but these are neither firm nor flat; and with raised sides, baby may roll onto their side and get 'stuck' against the side, not able to roll back onto their back. In such instances, baby may be at risk of suffocating. Likewise, nests or pods should not be used within the cot itself.
- Although they look inviting, cot bumpers should not be used. They can restrict air flow around the baby and may be a suffocation hazard. Likewise, avoid placing toys in the cot as they too can become a suffocation and/or choking hazard. Be sure to remove all toys before placing baby in the cot.

Remember

Babies should be placed on their backs for every sleep or nap time, should baby roll onto their side or front, simply reposition them on their back

Cots and mattresses

- Babies should not be wedged or elevated, nor should they be strapped into the cot; babies will naturally move and stretch during sleep, and they should not be restricted in any way.
- Ideally, each baby should have their own mattress. Where this is not possible, use a waterproof protective sheet and anti-bacterial spray to wipe it down, and cover it with a clean sheet before the next baby lays on the mattress.
- Regularly inspect the mattress for wear and tear, use the label to date stamp when the mattress was purchased / first used to monitor the age of the mattress. When you notice a mattress is not in a safe condition, i.e. with holes, the mattress should be replaced immediately.
- The space between the cot and the mattress should not be more than 3cm
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when setting up and using new equipment



Temperature

- The ideal room temperature for a baby is between 16-20°C depending on the temperature outside. Use a room thermometer and record the temperature whilst baby is sleeping at regular intervals.
- Should you want to check the baby's temperature whilst sleeping, place your hand gently on their chest beneath their clothing. Gauging a baby's temperature by touching their hands or feet is not an accurate test. Hands and feet are known as 'extremities' and will often be cooler than the chest area for example, making you think they are 'cold' - this is not an accurate gauge of a body temperature and could cause the infant to overheat.
- During sunny periods, do not place a blanket / covering over the cot / pram as this reduces the airflow and raises the temperature in the pram / cot considerably, increasing the risk of SIDS. A sun canopy, which may need to be adjusted, is sufficient.
- Cots should not be placed by a radiator or window
- The room where the baby is sleeping should be well ventilated

Temperature

- Babies regulate their body temperature through their heads - this is a natural cooling mechanism. Overheating can increase risk of SIDS. Do not put a hat on a baby before sleep time as hats can fall off while they are sleeping and potentially cover their face, increasing the risk of suffocation.
- In a nursery, a practitioner should be regularly monitoring the babies sleeping and recording the room temperature, as well as the time the baby went to sleep and woke up, and the times when the baby was checked on during their sleep period. Practitioners should be watching the chest rise and fall, making sure baby is sleeping in a safe position and not tangled in a blanket, and that baby is not too hot or cold.



Blankets

- Cellular blankets are good to use as the holes in these blankets provide air flow.
- Blankets should be tucked in firmly at chest level. A baby will naturally sleep with their arms raised above their head, and their arms should be kept free if this is the 'norm' for them. No loose bedding should be in the cot during sleep time.
- If using a sleep bag for sleep time, ensure it fits and is not loose around the shoulders. If the sleeping bag is too loose, a baby may slide down in the sleeping bag and risk suffocation if their nose and mouth becomes covered. Depending on the temperature, no additional blankets may be needed.

Remember

A blanket folded counts as two layers.

Jewellery

- Jewellery on babies should be avoided during nap and sleep time. However, in many cultures, jewellery is given to celebrate the birth. If a baby in your care is wearing a piece of jewellery that the parent / carer does not want you to remove, you must be more vigilant when caring for the baby, particularly whilst the baby is sleeping.
- Some parents are choosing to use amber necklaces, which are reported to help a baby whilst teething. Where possible, any form of jewellery should be avoided and taken off for sleep time. This should be done in consultation with the parents / carers so as not to disrespect the families' customs and beliefs.

Top tip

You may wish to include a paragraph or statement in your health and safety policy on jewellery, clearly expressing the need for caution and the importance of sleep safety for the children at your setting.

Advice for parents / carers

- Babies should be placed on their backs for every sleep or nap time, should baby roll onto their side or front, simply reposition them on their back
- A baby should sleep in the room with a parent / carer (in a cot / moses basket) for 6 months before being transferred into their own room
- Sleeping with your baby is not encouraged and can increase the risk of SIDS and accidental death. You and your baby need a safe space to sleep as per the guidance above.
- If baby sleeps with a dummy, ensure it is not attached to a cord of any kind. If baby loses the dummy during a sleep time, simply replace for sleep to continue.
- Just as smoking and vaping should be avoided during pregnancy, it should also be avoided around babies and young children as it has been linked to SIDS

Did you know?

According to The Lullaby Trust, if you or your partner smokes while you're pregnant or after your baby is born, the risk of SIDS (also known as cot death) is greatly increased.

Smoking and vaping

- It is not just parents and carers who should avoid smoking around babies and young children, practitioners need to avoid smoking and vaping too
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2023 sets clear guidance about smoking and vaping: '3.57.Providers must not allow smoking in or on the premises when children are present or about to be present. Staff should not vape or use e-cigarettes when children are present and providers should consider Public Health England advice on their use in public places and workplaces.'
- Smoke fumes linger on clothing, skin, and hair for some time after you have been smoking




Smoking and vaping

Some questions to consider in your own practice:

- Do the policies and procedures at your setting protect babies and children?
- Do staff have an assigned smoking area, away from the setting?
- Is this area far enough away that smoke will not flow back into an open window?
- Are staff expected to wash their hands and change their clothes after a smoking break?

You may want to review your policies and procedures on smoking and vaping to ensure it reflects current guidance for SIDS and the EYFS.

A baby wearing a white onesie is lying on a yellow background. The baby's face is partially visible, and they appear to be resting or sleeping. The overall tone is warm and soft.

If you enjoyed this e-Book and would like to learn more about the topics covered here, then you may be interested in our Education short courses or using our lesson resources for Early Years Educator and Children and Young People qualifications.

Laser Short Courses, including 'The baby room' and 'Health and safety in the early years', can be found here:

www.lasershortcourses.co.uk/courseList.php

Contact us for more information:

www.laserlearning.co.uk

www.lasershortcourses.co.uk