

Recommendations

Facts

- Each year, around six children die of suffocation in bed.
- Approximately 1500 children aged 6 months to 4 years are admitted to hospital each year due to falls from their beds.
- Each year, an average of 25 children die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS. What is SIDS? Sometimes, children aged 0 to 2 who seemed completely healthy die unexpectedly of unknown causes, often while sleeping. If all other causes have been ruled out, the child is considered to have died of SIDS. A great deal of research has been done to determine the cause of SIDS. Researchers have found that there is a decreased risk of SIDS if:
 - the child sleeps on its back;
 - the child sleeps under a blanket or in a sleeping bag;
 - the child is not exposed to smoke.
 - the child is not too warm.

It is important for children to sleep safely. Does your child sleep safely? Read our recommendations to find out what you can do to make sure that your child sleeps safely.

Put your baby to sleep on its back

As soon as it is born, put your child to sleep on its back. This leaves your child's face free, allowing it to breathe easily. This is the safest position for it to sleep in. Why is it so unsafe for your child to sleep on its stomach?

When it does, it lays with its nose and mouth against the mattress, which is dangerous because it prevents your child from breathing easily.

Should your child never lie on its stomach? Yes, it is fine when your child is awake. This is even good for your child's development, as it can practice turning its head, moving around and turning over. However, never leave your child alone when it is on its stomach!

Once your child can turn over from its stomach to its back and from its back to its stomach, then it is safe for it to sleep on its stomach.

Will my child's head grow lopsided if it sleeps on its back? No, not if you lay it down looking in a different direction each time. Lay your child in bed looking left one time, then to the right the next and its head will not grow lopsided.

Do not use a duvet

For your child's first two years, do not use a duvet. A duvet can be much too warm for your child. There is also a danger that your child's head can be covered by the duvet. That is dangerous, because your child can have difficulty breathing. A duvet is therefore not suitable for young children. We advise letting them sleep in a sleeping bag instead.

If your child doesn't use a sleeping bag, then use a sheet and blanket or a blanket in a duvet cover. However, the blanket should not be larger than the duvet cover, which should be large enough to hold the blanket without folding it.



You must be able to tuck in the edges of the blanket at least 10 cm under the mattress. Make sure that the duvet cover is closed, so that your child cannot get caught inside. Tuck in the blanket, sheet or duvet cover tightly on the sides and the foot of the bed. Put your child as close to the foot end of the bed as possible, with its feet near the foot of the bed. This will keep its head from becoming covered by the blanket.

Lay your child in a cradle or a crib

The safest place for your child to sleep is in a cradle or a crib. For the first six months, keep your child's cradle or crib as close as possible to your own bed.

Do not sleep in the same bed with your child for the first four months. This is dangerous because your child can become too warm due to your own body heat or the thickness of the duvet. Your child can also become stuck between mattresses or under your duvet. Other risks to your child include falling out of bed, or you accidentally rolling over on top of it in your sleep. Therefore, always lay your child in its own cradle or crib for the first four months.

Use a sleeping bag for babies

For your child's first two years, use a sleeping bag for babies. This is the safest way to keep your child warm while it is sleeping.

The sleeping bag does not cover your child's head. This allows your child to breathe freely without becoming too warm or too cold, because it is always covered by the sleeping bag. What should you pay attention to when buying a sleeping bag? Make sure that the sleeping bag fits properly. It shouldn't be too big or too small, as that can be dangerous for your child. The sleeping bag is too big if the arm holes and the neck opening are too big, as this would allow your child to crawl inside the sleeping bag.

A sleeping bag is too small if your child cannot lay down flat inside or if the arm and neck openings are too tight.

You may use a thin sleeping bag together with a small blanket or sheet, as this would prevent your baby from rolling over onto its stomach.

When using a blanket or a sheet, place your child as close to the foot end of the bed as possible, with its feet near the foot of the bed. Tuck in the blanket or sheet tightly around the sides and the foot of the bed.

Make sure that your child is not too warm

Do not dress your child too warm or too cold when you put it to bed. Never let your child sleep with a nightcap on after the first week.

How do you know if your child is warm enough? Feel your child's neck. Your child is too warm if its neck is very warm. Your child is too cold if its neck is cold. The temperature of your child's room must be between 16°C and 18°C. If your child has a fever, then cover it less warm than usual.

Make sure that your child is not in a smoke-filled environment

Smoke from cigarettes, cigars, pipes or incense is very bad for children. A smoke-filled environment is not only bad for your child today; it can cause a lifetime of health problems. Do not smoke near your child, and do not bring it to places where there is a lot of smoke.



Provide a safe bed and a safe environment for your child

The bed must be well-ventilated. Most cribs therefore have bars on the sides. The distance between the bars must be between 4.5 and 6.5 cm. If they are farther apart, your child can get its head or body caught between them. Choose a sturdy mattress, without lumps or holes.

The mattress must fit properly inside of the bed. Do not use a pillow or crib bumpers.

Do not place stuffed animals made of soft, filled cloth or plastic in bed with your child. Do not use a plastic mattress cover. All of these things can prevent your child from breathing properly.

Provide a safe bed and a safe environment for your child. For example, do not place the bed or crib near curtain strings or cords. If you wish to place a mobile in your child's room, hang it high enough, out of your child's reach. A mobile is intended for your child to look at, not to play with.



Ventilation

Fresh air is important, so open a window in your child's room regularly to let in fresh air.

Never strap your child into bed

Some parents are afraid that their child might roll onto its stomach or climb out of bed, so they fasten their child into bed with a strap or tie. That is dangerous, as your child can get caught in the strap or tie as it moves around in bed, increasing the risk of suffocation. Never strap your child into bed! If you are worried that your child might roll onto its stomach, use a sleeping bag for babies? If your child is a little older and you are worried that it might try to climb out of bed and fall, then remove the bars from the bed. This will allow your child to climb out of bed without falling. You can also buy a larger bed without bars.



Never give your child medicine that makes it sleepy

Always be careful with medicines. Never give your child medicines that make it sleepy or other sedatives. If you do not know whether you can give your child a certain medicine, then call your doctor.

Provide order and structure

Children need order and structure. Make sure that your child follows the same pattern of eating and sleeping every day. Avoid over-activity and stress, as they make your child sleep poorly. A good night's sleep is very important for a child.

Provide breastfeeding and use a pacifier

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of SIDS, so it is a good idea to provide breastfeeding if possible. You can also give your child a pacifier before it goes to sleep to reduce the chance of SIDS. If you are breastfeeding your child, make sure that the feeding goes well first, then give your child a pacifier. If your child receives bottle-feeding, you can use a pacifier immediately.

Checklist

How do you know if your child is sleeping safely? Do this sleep test!

True	False	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I always put my child on its back to sleep.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child sleeps in a sleeping bag or under a sheet and blanket.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child always sleeps in its own crib or cradle.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child lies as close to the foot of the bed as possible.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I regularly check whether my child is too warm or too cold.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The temperature in my child's room is between 16 and 18 degrees.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child's bed does not have a pillow or crib bumper.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child cannot reach cords or wires.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child's bed has bars spaced between 4.5 and 6.5 cm apart.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child's bed has a sturdy mattress that fits the bed properly.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child does is not exposed to smoke.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I regularly ventilate my child's room.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I never strap my child into bed.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My child cannot fall out of bed.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I never give my child medicines that make it sleepy or other sedatives.

If you have answered all of the questions with 'True', then your child sleeps safely.
If you have not answered all of the questions with 'True', then you could be doing more for your child's safety. Read our advice again carefully, and make sure that your child can sleep safely!

More information?

For more information on helping your child sleep safely, go to:
www.veiligheid.nl.

What does the Dutch Consumer Safety Institute do?

The Consumer Safety Institute wants to prevent accidents from happening in the home. To do so, we advise parents and provide information on what is safe for your child and what is unsafe. If you have any questions, please call +31 (0)20 - 511 45 67. You can also send us an e-mail at info@veiligheid.nl or go to www.veiligheid.nl.

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This publication was compiled with the greatest possible care. The Consumer Safety Institute accepts no liability for any inaccuracies in this text. Citation of (parts of) the text in this publication is only permitted with correct references.

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Sleeping safely

What can you do to help your child sleep safely?
www.veiligheid.nl



Don't let yourself be caught unprepared!