

Factsheet for Families

Safe sleeping in child care

Babies and young children spend a lot of time sleeping, so knowing how to keep them safe during sleep and rest is important. Safe sleeping practices need to be implemented correctly and consistently. The following information is from the SIDS and Kids Infant Safe Sleeping Program, which is based on scientific evidence. Since this program was implemented in Australia, the number of babies dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) has reduced by 85 per cent.

What are the safe sleeping recommendations for babies?

1. Sleep babies on their back from birth, not on their tummy or side – placing babies on their back means they have better airway protection and are less likely to choke on vomit than tummy sleeping babies.
2. Sleep babies with their face uncovered – no doonas, pillows, lambs wool, bumpers or soft toys.
3. Avoid exposing babies to tobacco smoke before birth and after.
4. Provide a safe sleeping environment which includes a safe cot, mattress and bedding.
5. Sleep babies in their own safe sleeping environment, next to the parent's bed for the first six to twelve months of life.

To keep babies safe when sleeping in child care, services should provide:

- A cot that meets the Australian Standard (AS 2173) or a portable cot (AS 2195)
- A mattress that is firm, flat and fitted. A capsule is not suitable for sleeping babies other than when a baby is travelling in a car
- Safe cot bedding – remove pillows, quilts, doonas, duvets and sheepskins from the cot
- A safe sleeping environment – never sleep babies on a pillow, beanbag or couch.

What if a baby rolls onto its tummy?

- Most back sleeping babies cannot roll onto their tummy by themselves until about 5-6 months of age
- Always place a baby to sleep on their back and try using a safe infant sleeping bag.

At your child care service you should expect the following:

- The educators work with you to develop safe, acceptable sleep routines for your child, which reflect the recommendations from SIDS and Kids
- Your service offers you literature on safe sleeping practices, or advice on who to contact if you have any further questions.

Your child care service should also:

- Ask you during enrolment and orientation about your child's sleeping and resting patterns; and also your home practices for settling your child to sleep. For example, does your child have a favourite story or lullaby which helps them to settle?
- Update you regularly on any changing patterns in your child's sleep or rest at the service. You should also advise your service of any changes to your child's daily sleeping patterns at home
- Consider the needs of all children attending the service. Techniques such as 'controlled crying' or 'teach to sleep' will not be appropriate in a child care setting.

To discuss any concerns or questions you may have regarding your child and safe sleeping, please speak to:

or telephone: