

# Safe sleeping in child care

*Dorothy Ford from SIDS and Kids discusses the recognised safe sleeping recommendations for babies and provides answers to frequently asked questions.*

Babies spend a lot of time sleeping, so knowing how to keep them safe is important information for every educator and child care service. Safe sleeping practices also need to be implemented correctly and consistently.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexpected death of a baby from no known cause. The SIDS and Kids Infant Safe Sleeping Program is based on scientific evidence, and since it was implemented in Australia, the number of babies dying from SIDS has reduced by 85 per cent.

Research has shown that babies in the care of people other than their parents are at greater risk of sudden unexpected infant death. This is because there is an increased risk for babies who are used to sleeping on their back at home but who may be placed on their tummy for the first time while in the care of people other than their parents.

## What are the safe sleeping recommendations for babies?

- Sleep baby 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.
- Sleep baby with their face uncovered – no doonas, pillows, lambs wool, bumpers or soft toys.
- Avoid exposing babies to tobacco smoke before birth and after.
- Provide a safe sleeping environment which includes a safe cot, safe mattress and safe bedding.
- Sleep baby 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 use:

- A safe sleeping environment – never sleep babies on a pillow, beanbag, couch or waterbed
- A cot that meets the Australian Standard (AS 2172) or a portable cot (AS 2195)

### This article relates to:

FDCQA Principles: 1.3-1.4, 4.1 and 4.5

QIAS Principles: 1.4, 2.1, 5.4 and 6.5

- A cot mattress that is firm, flat and fitted. Never sleep babies on a pillow or couch. A capsule is not suitable for sleeping babies other than while a baby is travelling in a car
- Safe cot bedding – remove pillows, quilts, doonas, duvets and sheepskins from the cot.

## Frequently asked questions

### What if parents request practices that differ from SIDS and Kids safe sleeping guidelines?

A service cannot accept the risk and consequences of unsafe sleeping practices and should insist on implementing recommended practices at all times. However if a parent asks that their baby sleep on their tummy or side, they should be told that this increases the risk of sudden unexpected infant death. If a parent continues to insist, then the service should be advised in writing by the child's medical practitioner.

### What if a baby rolls onto their tummy?

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

### How can educators discuss these practices with families?

To help services and educators discuss these practices with families, SIDS and Kids has developed a *Child Care Kit* containing safe sleeping literature including a policy template, video, brochures, posters, an action plan in the event of a sudden infant death and bereavement resources. You can order this at [www.sidsandkids.org](http://www.sidsandkids.org)

A list of the research supporting SIDS and Kids safe sleeping recommendations is available on request at [national@sidsandkids.org](mailto:national@sidsandkids.org) or telephone **1300 308 307** ■