Reduce the Risk of Cot Death

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SUMMARY

• Place your baby on the back to sleep, in a cot in a room with you
• Do not smoke in pregnancy or let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby
• Do not share a bed with your baby if you have been drinking alcohol, if you take drugs or if you are a smoker
• Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair
• Do not let your baby get too hot. Keep your baby’s head uncovered. Place your baby in the “feet to foot” position.

THE SAFEST PLACE FOR YOUR BABY TO SLEEP IS ON THE BACK, IN A COT IN A ROOM WITH YOU

Place your baby on the back to sleep from the very beginning for both day and night sleeps. This will reduce the risk of cot death. Side sleeping is not as safe as sleeping on the back. Healthy babies placed on their backs are not more likely to choke. When the baby is old enough to roll over they should not be prevented from doing so.

Babies may get flattening of the part of the head they lie on (plagiocephaly). This will become rounder again as they grow, particularly if they are encouraged to lie on their tummies to play when they are awake and being supervised. Experiencing a range of different positions and a variety of movement while awake is also good for a baby’s development.

Sleep on the back

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot in a room with you for the first six months.

If you or your partner:
• are smokers (no matter where or when you smoke and even if you never smoke in bed);
• have recently drunk alcohol;
• have taken medication or drugs that make you sleep more heavily;
• feel very tired;
Do not share a bed with your baby.

The risks of bedsharing are also increased if your baby:
• was premature (born before 37 weeks);
• was of low birth weight (less than 2.5kg or 5.5lb)

There is also a risk that you might roll over in your sleep and suffocate your baby, or that your baby could get caught between the wall and the bed, or could roll out of an adult bed and be injured.

Never sleep with a baby on a sofa or armchair. It’s lovely to have your baby with you for a cuddle or a feed but it’s safest to put your baby back in their cot before you go to sleep.

CUT OUT SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY – PARTNERS TOO!

Smoking in pregnancy greatly increases the risk of cot death. It is best not to smoke at all.

If you are pregnant and want to give up, please call the NHS Pregnancy smoking helpline on 0800 169 9 169.

Other Headings in Leaflet

Don’t Let Anyone Smoke In The Same Room As Your Baby
Don’t Let Your Baby Get Too Hot (Or Too Cold)
Don’t Let Your Baby’s Head Become Covered
Feeding
If Your Baby Is Unwell Seek Medical Advice Promptly
Remember, Cot Death Is Rare