



## Infant Sleep Safety

By Mary L. Pulido, Ph.D.

Infant sleep safety recommendations have certainly changed since I was a parent of a newborn! Bumpers -- out, stuffed animals -- out, fluffy blankets -- out! I'm referring to "out of the crib." These items, once regularly placed in a crib, should not be near a newborn. As a member of the NYC Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT), I spent the last year reviewing the data on infant injury death. Then, the CFRT developed recommendations for preventing sleep-related injury deaths among infants under the age of one.

Sleep-related infant deaths are caused by both injury (unintentional suffocation in bed and undetermined causes) and by Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Between 2004 and 2008 there were 325 injury-related deaths among NYC infants. Of these, 252 were related to unsafe sleeping conditions and environments. It's a leading cause of death among NYC infants. There are ways to prevent this tragedy from occurring.

Here are some of the CFRT 2011 recommendations for Safe Sleep for Infants.

- Positioning -- Always place the baby on their back to sleep, not their stomach or side. The side sleep position is not recommended as they can roll over onto their stomachs, which increases the risk of suffocation. The baby should sleep alone, in a crib or a bassinet, on a firm mattress. Most deaths occurred when an infant was sharing a bed.
- The Crib -- Please make sure it is safety-approved. The railings should not drop down as they can come apart and injure the baby. The mattress should fit snug against the rails. As a measure, you should not be able to fit more than two fingers between the mattress and the sides of the crib. A can of soda should not fit between the rails.
- Babies should NOT sleep under fluffy bedding. Use warm pajamas instead of blankets. If a light blanket is needed, tuck it firmly under the bottom half of the crib mattress and below the baby's arms. Pillows, comforters, quilts and crib-bumpers are examples of unsafe bedding. The crib should also be free of stuffed animals. Keep all objects away from the baby's face so they don't suffocate.
- Although tempting, don't bring the baby to bed with you. It's dangerous, particularly if you're exhausted, been drinking or using a medication that causes drowsiness. Many deaths occurred because the adult "rolled over" on the infant and suffocated them.
- If you bring your baby to bed to breast-feed, put them back in the crib after the feeding. Keep the crib or bassinet next to your bed if it makes it easier.
- Babysitters, friends and family members should also be aware of these safety rules. Make sure that anyone that takes care of your baby follows them.
- Please know that if the stresses of parenthood are overwhelming, there is help available. Call the Parent Helpline at 1-800- Children (1-800-244-5373.)

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