

Bedsharing and Breastfeeding

Bedsharing is very common and often unplanned. Parents may bedshare because babies feed frequently at night.

The information in this handout is intended for breastfeeding mothers. Bedsharing may be risky if your baby has never been fed at the breast.

-Feed your baby at night in a safe bed rather than on a sofa, chair, or recliner.



◀ Safest position for baby, sometimes called the “protective position” or “cuddle curl”

Make your bed safe:

- Use a firm, flat mattress.
- Move your bed away from any wall.
- Make sure there are no small spaces around the edge of your bed where your baby could become trapped.
- Do not attach a guardrail to an adult bed.
- Place your baby on their back at the level of your breast. Do not put your baby next to your face or on a pillow.
- Remove heavy blankets, extra pillows, and cords dangling near the bed.
- Do not allow sheets or blankets to cover your baby’s face or head.
- Consider putting your mattress on the floor.

These safety guidelines are very important:

- No one should sleep with your baby on a sofa, recliner, or chair.
- No one who has recently used alcohol or drugs should sleep with your baby.
- No one who has recently taken medication that makes them sleepy should sleep with your baby.
- No one who smokes should sleep with your baby.
- No one should sleep with a baby who was born premature or with a low birthweight.
- No one should leave a baby alone on an adult bed.

Be safe when not bedsharing:

- Place your baby on their back to sleep.
- Keep your baby in your room near your bed.
- Consider using a bassinet or infant bed that attaches to your bed (“co-sleeper” or “sidecar”).
- Put your baby in a clear flat space after feeding.
- Do not put your baby in a cushioned “nest” or “pod.”

✓ A co-sleeper (sidecar) is an alternative to bedsharing



SAFE SLEEP SEVEN

7

Adapted from LLL's seven steps to safe bedsharing with your baby.

1

SMOKE FREE

Both second hand and third hand smoke put your baby at risk. This is a dose dependent risk, the more smoking baby is exposed to the greater the SIDS risk.

2

SOBER

Both parents must be sober and aware that the baby will be in the bed. No alcohol, drugs or drowsy medications (eg, cold and flu medicine)

3

NO UNDERLYING HEALTH PROBLEMS

Baby born full term, with no respiratory issues. Parents in healthy weight range with no sleep disorders including sleep apnea. Baby doesn't snore or have apnoea. Parents and baby healthy.

4

UNDERSTAND SAFE PLACEMENT

Baby should be at breast height, with mum in a C curve around baby. Baby should still sleep on their back.

5

TEMPERATURE REGULATION

Baby dressed in one lightweight layer more than parents. Cover the baby, not the bed, blankets to waist height on parents. Swaddling and bed sharing don't mix.

6

SAFE - PREPARED SURFACE

Firm mattress, free of toys, pillows, gaps (eg between the bed and wall). Clothes and environment free of cords, strings, and hats. No pets in bed. Blankets to waist height for parents. NEVER share sleep on a couch, recliner, rocking chair or hammock.

7

NURSING MOTHER

Breastfeeding is a SIDS protective mechanism, and cuts the risk of SIDS by 50%. It is therefore advised that families that bedshare are aware of this.

REFERENCES

<http://breastfeedingtoday-llli.org/the-safe-sleep-seven/>
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