safe sleep heroes

toolkit for families & communities

First Year Cleveland
You can be a hero.

Nearly everyone knows or will know a baby. And at some point, nearly everyone will influence the way a baby is put to sleep for a nap or for the night. Parents and people who support parents can breathe easy—and so can babies—when Safe Sleep is simple to remember with ABCD.

Every year we lose too many babies to preventable, sleep related deaths in the Cleveland area; it is the equivalent of a kindergarten classroom of healthy children. It’s important to remember these deaths are preventable. They don’t have to happen and we know how to keep our babies safe. It’s up to us to do it.

To get these tools virtually, you can text SLEEP to 216-930-3390.

ABCD. Know it, do it, share it.

Safe Sleep Heroes Toolkit  First Year Cleveland  www.firstyearcleveland.org
Safe sleep is easy as ABCD

A. Alone
- Nothing and no one else in the sleep space
- No toys or stuffed animals
- Baby should never sleep with parents, siblings, pets or anyone else

B. Back
- Baby should be placed to sleep on their back
- A baby is actually at less risk for choking on their back than when on their stomach
- Babies breathe easier when they are on their backs

C. Crib
- Baby should be in a naked crib with only a fitted sheet
- Never use other bedding or soft items like bumpers, sleep wedges, pillows, or blankets

D. Don't smoke
- Secondhand smoke increases the risk of sleep-related death
- Never smoke in a baby's environment, even when they are awake!
Mythbusting

There are so many myths about Safe Sleep that can make it hard to know what is best for your baby. We did a little myth-busting to help families know how to keep their babies safest.
Alone

Myths
- Won’t the baby be cold?
- Without bumpers, the baby will get stuck in between the crib slats.
- I used bumpers/blankets/pillows/toys.
- The baby will be lonely!

Focus on keeping the room where the baby sleeps a comfortable temperature. Overheating contributes to preventable sleep related death in infants; a baby in a sleeper will be warm enough in a room that feels comfortable to an adult. If you are concerned that the baby will be too chilly, you can add a sleep sack or wearable blanket that is secure and safe for sleeping.

There are no recent reports of serious injuries to infants from the bars or slats on a crib. Be sure that the space between crib bars is no more than a standard soda can.

Bumpers, blankets, and pillows are a very serious suffocation hazard for infants.

Even older infants and toddlers can be injured by bumpers, including using them to climb out of a crib.

While Safe Sleep means using a different sleep surface, it does not mean that you have to sleep far away from your baby! A crib, bassinet, or Pack and Play can be set up in a parent's room. In fact, it is recommended to share a room with your baby for at least the first six months to one year.
Back

Myths
- Babies sleep better on their tummies.
- Babies choke on their backs.

Sometimes babies may sleep deeper on their tummies, but for some babies it can dull their startle reflex. Babies sleep so deeply that when their airway becomes blocked, they do not wake up. It is also important to remember that babies who are used to sleeping on their backs may have a hard time breathing if they are sleeping on their tummies, but do not yet have the strength to roll over.

While doctors used to tell parents to put a baby on their side, recommendations have changed because we have better information today.

Because of the way a baby's reflexes and anatomy work together, the back is the safest position to keep from choking while asleep.

Babies are less likely to choke if they are on their back.
Crib

Myths
• Isn’t my baby safer next to me?
• I’m a light sleeper, it will be fine.
• I am worried we won’t bond if we don’t co-sleep.
• I put my other babies in bed with me, and they were fine.

Even if you have successfully bedshared with other children, it is risky to do so. Light sleepers have rolled onto their babies and not woken up. The average person moves more than a dozen times a night, and that can be onto your baby.

Just like every sleep is an opportunity, it can also be a risk. Suffocation is silent, and when you are asleep there are no guarantees.

Your baby is worth making sure that every sleep is a safe sleep.

If you are concerned about safety or bonding, put the baby’s sleep surface—a crib, bassinet, Pack and Play, cribette, or baby box—next to (but not on) the parent’s bed.

Avoid any gaps, drapery, cords, mobiles, balloons, or other decorations that could fall into the baby’s sleep space or be grabbed by a curious baby.

Baby-wearing, reading to your baby, bath time, feeding, and so many other activities are excellent for bonding, and they do not carry the risk of co-sleeping.
Don't Smoke

Myths
- It's safe to smoke in the car.
- I'm not pregnant, so it's okay to smoke now.
- The baby doesn't sleep here, so second hand smoke will not be a problem

There can be no argument that second-hand smoke is dangerous for babies. But did you know that third-hand smoke or smoke residue on someone's hands, clothes, or in the sleep environment is linked to preventable, sleep related death in infants.

If you can smell smoke on someone or something, it can be dangerous for your baby.

We know that pregnant women should not smoke, but no one should smoke around a baby or in the baby's environment.
Creating a Safe Sleep Environment

Crib Safety

- No drop sides, no gaps between the mattress and crib, no broken/loose parts.
- Sleep positioners (such as wedges) are not recommended.
- Be sure there is no loose bedding, toys, or any other items in baby’s crib, or that could potentially fall into the crib.
- The only thing in the crib should be a fitted sheet and baby.
- Keep pets away from baby’s sleeping area.
- If you have multiples, such as twins or triplets, each should use their own sleep surface.

Baby Gear

- If your baby falls asleep in baby gear (such as a swing, seat, carseat, or stroller), move him or her onto a sleep surface. The devices are not meant for long periods of sleep or regular sleeping.

Feeding Baby in Bed

- Be sure to place her on her back on her own separate surface once feeding is finished and if you are tired, do not feed the baby on a soft surface, such as a couch or chair. Babies can become wedged and suffocate in the gaps around cushions of a couch or chair, or on the person feeding him or her. A couch or chair can be one of the most dangerous places to fall asleep with your baby.

Other Tips

- Babies should not sleep with siblings, even toddlers, as the other child or may accidentally roll onto or reposition the baby.
- Mobiles should be removed from a sleeping area once a baby is rolling over. Try using them in a changing area or consider skipping altogether.
- Remember to share the room, not the bed!
Safe Sleep Conversation Guide for Parents

You are your baby’s first and best advocate. Here are some tips for having conversations about safe sleep.
Having a conversation with a loved one about Safe Sleep can be hard. No one wants to give the impression that they are judging someone else’s parenting, even if that parenting happened decades ago. While the recommendations for Safe Sleep have changed, the love of family and community members for babies has not changed.

Our conversation guide gives you some tools to start difficult conversations. If you need a boost in confidence, look at our Mythbusting guide and fact sheet for more information about Safe Sleep.
Talk to grandparents.
Let grandparents know that you appreciate their help with your baby. Tell them that there is an easy way to remember how to safely sleep (ABCD), and emphasize that just like a car seat, this is another way to keep their grandbaby safer.

Talk to your partner or co-parent.
Of course, parents feel strongly about doing what is best for their baby and keeping their baby as safe as possible. Make sure you’re on the same page, and pledge to be a support to one another. It’s normal to be tired when you’ve got a new baby, and it’s hard to be at your best sometimes. Check out some of our resources for soothing your baby when it is hard to get them to sleep.

Talk to siblings.
Some siblings babysit or mind their younger siblings. Let them know what the safest way is to put a baby to sleep, and what your expectations are for their baby sibling. Talk to school-age and even younger children about making sure they do not put toys, blankets, or pillows in the baby’s sleep space. Let young children know that they cannot climb into the baby’s sleep space.

Talk to other caregivers.
Let others know you expect them to put the baby to sleep Alone, on their Back, and in a Crib every time. Emphasize that you do not allow smoking around the baby or in the baby’s environment. Let smokers know they need to have clean hands and a clean shirt on around your baby.
Conversation Starters

- “Every nap and night time is an opportunity!”
- "Did you know you can reduce the risk of SIDS by using the ABCDs?"

- “I heard a catchy way to remember Safe Sleep for babies – ABCD!”

- “These sleep sacks are so cute. Did you know they’re part of Safe Sleep recommendations?”

- “Safe sleep can be hard, but I know where you can find some tools!”

Starting a conversation is a brave act.
Thank you for making change happen and being a Safe Sleep Hero!
Remember, every sleep is an opportunity. And when you know better, you can do better.
Safe Sleep Tips for Every Family

Beyond the ABCDs of Safe Sleep, there are other things families can do to keep their babies healthy and reduce risk for sleep-related death.
Breastfeeding is linked to a lower risk of sleep related death

Breastfeeding provides your baby with the best nutrition, lowers their risk of many illnesses, and is great for bonding. It's also shown to reduce their risk of SIDS.

Breastfeeding is natural and wonderful, but it can also be challenging. Every mom has breastfeeding struggles from time to time. Talk to your provider about a lactation consultant, or check out Breastfeeding 101 from WIC. The state of Ohio has a toll-free 24/7 Statewide Breastfeeding Hotline staffed by live, trained lactation professionals. Services are available free of charge to all callers, including mothers, their families and partners, expectant parents, and health care providers. Call 1-888-588-3423

You have rights when it comes to breastfeeding in public or pumping at work. Find out more at firstyearcleveland.org/safe-sleep-tips.
Breastfeeding Support

If you are struggling with latching, try holding your baby differently. Some common breastfeeding holds are: the football hold; cross-cradle hold; lying-back hold; cradle hold; and the side-lying position.

You can also try a pillow under your arms, elbows, neck, or back for support. But remember, these cushions should never be used for a baby when they are sleeping or without supervision.

Breastfeeding can be so rewarding and great for bonding with baby— but it can also be difficult and frustrating at first, especially when you're not getting much sleep yourself. Everyone has breastfeeding struggles from time to time. Talk to your clinician about a lactation consultant, or call your local WIC office. You can also get great information from WIC's website.

Everyone can support breastfeeding!
At work, at home, and in public, we can all support breastfeeding parents and babies.

Dads and other non-breastfeeding caregivers can offer encouragement, care for other children, bring a snack or water, and help a tired mom get baby back to a safe sleep space.
Baby Gear and Tummy Time

Back is best for sleeping, but tummy time is important for development.

Babies should be awake, alert, and with an adult during tummy time. Tummy time can begin when babies come home from the hospital-- 3-5 minutes 2-3 times per day is a great start! After a diaper change or a nap is a good opportunity for tummy time. Props, such as pillows and positioners should only be used when babies are alert and an adult is providing close supervision.

Baby gear and sitting devices like swings and car seats are useful, but they are not for regular sleeping. If a baby falls asleep in a swing, bouncer, car set (especially outside of the car), stroller, or something similar be sure to put them on a firm, flat, safe sleep surface as soon as possible.

Also be careful not to cover babies in car seats, strollers, etc. with a blanket over the device. This can cause babies to overheat, even with a very thin blanket.

An inclined position is risky for babies, as it can cause partial airway collapse and other breathing problems for babies.
Typical Infant Sleep Cycles

Baby sleep and adult sleep are very different. Even preschoolers have very different sleep cycles than a baby!

Babies do not have regular sleep cycles until they are about 6 months old. Newborns can sleep 16-17 hours each day, but they may only sleep 1-2 hours at a time!

As they get older, babies need less overall sleep per day, but they still usually wake up a few times each night. Babies 4-12 months should sleep about 12-16 hours per day, including naps.

Each baby is different and so is each baby's sleep!

Many parents feel pressure that their baby should be sleeping a certain amount of time by a certain age—and that can be really hard for families. Some babies sleep 8 hours at 2 months and some don't until they are older. If you're concerned your baby isn't sleep enough, talk to their doctor.
Have A Plan

One of the best things you can do is have a Safe Sleep Plan.

No one makes their best choices when they're exhausted. And whoever first said "sleep like a baby" must not have been a parent!

Have a Safe Sleep Plan with strategies to help you when you need it, before you need it.

- Where will you feed your baby, especially at night when you're tired?
- What activities can you do to stay awake?
- Who can support you, either by directly helping with the baby or by giving your encouragement?

Think of support people and strategies you can use to keep your baby safe when you are very tired so that you can avoid risky situations. Some examples are:

- Set a timer when you are nursing your baby so you don't fall asleep with them in your bed
- Feed your baby in a hard chair (like a kitchen or dining room chair) and not the couch or a soft rocking chair; you're less likely to doze off while feeding them
- Stand up to rock and sway your baby instead of laying down or sitting
My Safe Sleep Plan

When I need help I can ask:

1. ______________ who will help me by______________________________.

2. ______________ who will help me by______________________________.

When I am very tired and need to feed or attend to the baby, I will:

- set a timer for _____ minutes to be sure I don't fall asleep
- ask __________ to be awake with me
- get out of bed and go
- ______________ for encouragement

My place to feed the baby:
______________________
______________________

My activities to stay awake:
______________________
______________________
______________________

Alone.
On their Back.
In a naked Crib.
Don't smoke.

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Soothing Your Baby

Let face it, sometimes getting a baby to sleep is rough. It can be very tempting to put the baby to sleep on their tummy or bring them into Mom and Dad’s bed—especially in those early days when no one is getting much sleep. But while it can be hard, it is not impossible. Here are some resources that may help you learn to soothe your baby. You can Google them, use the QR codes or short links. They’re also available by texting SLEEP to 216-930-3390.

5 S’ Method, with a video from Dr. Kristen Bruno of Children’s Hospital of St. Louis
https://is.gd/fivesforsleep

Crying and Your Baby: How to Calm a Fussy or Colicky Baby, from the American Academy of Pediatrics
https://is.gd/fussybaby

Sleep Struggle Resources from Zero to Three
https://is.gd/sleepstruggle

Getting Your Baby to Sleep from the American Academy of Pediatrics
https://is.gd/sleepybaby

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Safe Sleep Child Care Checklist

Ask to see the sleep environment.

- How frequently is bedding changed?
- Are you required to provide any bedding?
- If the childcare center provides the bedding, does it appear tight fitting?
- Are there gaps around the mattress?
- Are there any stuffed animals, a crib mobile, drapery cords, pillows, or bumper pads?
- If the sleep environment is a Pack and Play, bassinet, or cribette, are all the sides intact and free from tears and rips?
- Does the area feel stuffy, overly warm, or drafty?

Ask the childcare provider, daycare staff, or babysitter what their policy is for putting babies to sleep.

- Is there a written policy?
- Does staff get any training in safe sleep?
- Can they promise that there will only be one infant in each sleep space?
- How frequently will they check on a sleeping infant?

- Can they confirm that they will not put baby to sleep with a toy, pillow, or blanket?
- Can they confirm that nothing will be used to prop a baby in any position or to prop a bottle in the baby's sleep space?
- Can they confirm that any and all pacifiers will be free of clips, stuffed animals, and any other potential hazards?
- Can they confirm that your baby will be put to sleep on his or her back every time they go to sleep?
If You Need A Safe Space for Your Baby to Sleep

Contact

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health at 216-201-2000 or United Way 211

Many organizations in Cuyahoga and the surrounding counties are able to provide no-cost cribettes for families who need a safe place for their infants to sleep. Talk to your baby's pediatrician or your clinician if you need more information about a safe sleep space for your baby.
The Safe Sleep Toolkit is provided for education and informational purposes only and does not constitute providing medical advice or professional services. The information is provided on an “as-is” basis and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health condition. Individuals seeking medical advice should establish a patient-provider relationship with a licensed healthcare provider and follow up with that particular provider. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information at the time of original publication, The MetroHealth System and First Year Cleveland do not accept any liability, with respect to loss, damage, injury or expense arising from any such errors or omissions in the contents of the Safe Sleep Toolkit, or from any individual or entity’s use, viewing or reliance upon the Safe Sleep Toolkit or its content information in any manner.