

## **Winter Alert for Caregivers and Parents Regarding SIDS**

By Joan Bangen

Winter brings an increase in the number of infants who die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS, according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. During cold months caregivers and parents often place extra blankets or nightclothes on infants, hoping to provide them with extra warmth. Experts think the higher incidence of SIDS in the colder months may be attributable to the greater risk of infection infants face during this time or the overheating of infants. Parents and caregivers of infants under one year of age should be careful not to put too many layers of clothing or blankets on infants and keep the temperature in the baby's room so it is comfortable to an adult.

### **What is SIDS?**

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or crib death as it is sometimes called is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant under one year of age. SIDS is the major cause of death in infants 1 month to 1 year of age with the ages of 2 to 4 months the most vulnerable. Native American babies are about three times more likely than Caucasian babies to die of SIDS and African American children are approximately two times more susceptible. Also, more boys are SIDS victims than girls.

### **What Causes SIDS?**

The causes of SIDS are unknown at this time but there are a number of factors that seem to put a baby at higher risk of dying from SIDS. Babies who sleep on their stomachs are more likely to die of SIDS than those who sleep on their backs. Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are three times more likely to have a SIDS baby, and exposure to passive smoke from smoking by mothers, fathers, caregivers, and others in the household doubles a baby's risk of SIDS. Other risk factors include mothers who are less than 20 years old at the time of their first pregnancy, babies born to mothers who had no or late prenatal care, and premature or low birth weight babies.

Researchers have found that one of the most important ways to reduce a baby's risk of dying of SIDS is to always put the baby to sleep on his/her back. Since 1992, when the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) began recommending that babies sleep on their backs, the rate of SIDS has fallen by 43%. Babies who sleep on their stomachs are 4 times more likely to die of SIDS than those who sleep on their backs.

### **How Can I Reduce the Risk of SIDS in Child Care?**

A disproportionate number of SIDS deaths (approximately 20%) occur in child care centers or homes. In 2003 Healthy Child Care America launched a nationwide effort to unite child care, health, and SIDS prevention partners to reduce the risk of deaths in child care settings in a Back to Sleep campaign.

There are some simple ways you can reduce the risk of SIDS in your child care center or home.

### **Steps to Reduce SIDS in Child Care**

- « Always place babies to sleep on their backs in cribs that meet Consumer Product Safety Commission crib safety standards. Make sure your crib has no missing or broken hardware and slats no more than 2 3/8" apart, no corner posts over 1/16" high, no cutout designs in the headboard or footboard, a firm, tight-fitting mattress, and a safety certification seal (on new cribs). For crib safety criteria contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or call 1-800-638-2772.
- « Locate the crib in a smoke-free room that is at a temperature that does not overheat the baby's sleeping room.
- « Do not overdress the baby for sleep.
- « Keep pillows, stuffed animals, bumpers, and toys out of the crib.
- « If a light blanket is needed, make sure the baby's feet are at the foot of the crib and the blanket is tucked in on all sides and underneath the arms of the baby, not higher than the chest.
- « Create a safe sleep policy in your center or home to help you talk about *Back to Sleep* with families and staff.

*HCCA: Reducing the Risk of SIDS in Child Care Fact Sheet*

Other tips from the Healthy Child Care America Back to Sleep Campaign include:

1. While awake, babies need supervised tummy time to help them develop strong neck, shoulder, and back muscles.
2. Once placed in the crib on the back, an older baby may be allowed to assume any position that seems comfortable. If the baby can repeatedly turn from back to tummy, then it is OK to allow him or her to sleep in that position as long as you are comfortable.
3. Few medical reasons merit exemption from the back to sleep positioning, but if the baby does have a medical reason that requires them to sleep in a position other than on the back a letter must be provided from the infant's health professional stating the medical reason and what position the baby should sleep in.
4. Back to sleep is a safe, comfortable way for babies to sleep. If you encounter resistance, share your safe sleep policy with families and staff to encourage them to put the baby to sleep on the back while in the center or home.
5. Support parents who want to breastfeed their children.

### **How do I Get More Information?**

Numerous SIDS information resources are available. You can type SIDS into your internet search engine or contact the following:

- Healthy Child Care America Back to Sleep Campaign and links to other resources contact Lauren Kotch, program coordinator, at lkotch@aap.org or 800/433-9016 ext 4016 or visit the HCCA web site at <http://www.healthychildcare.org>.
- SIDS reduction applicable Standards from *Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards* go to the National Resource Center at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>.
- Back to Sleep Campaign contact the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Back to Sleep Campaign, 301-496-5133 or <http://www.nichd.nih.gov>.

***For Further information about Healthy Child Care Wyoming***

[http://www.uwyo.edu/Family/UW\\_HCCW\\_website/HCCWWebPage.htm](http://www.uwyo.edu/Family/UW_HCCW_website/HCCWWebPage.htm)

Dr. Karen Williams, Project Director, at 307-766-5688 or [cachevki@uwyo.edu](mailto:cachevki@uwyo.edu)

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