

Best Child Care Practices for Infant Sleeping

1. **Place all infants (birth through 12 months) completely flat on their backs on a firm, tight-fitting mattress for sleep in a crib.**
 - ALWAYS place an infant flat on her back for sleep in a crib or playpen, unless it is ordered by a health care provider to do otherwise. It is required to obtain a **written order from the health care provider specifying the medical reason and specific time frame to follow order** to keep in the infant's file. Review it with parents periodically.
 - ALWAYS put an infant on her back each time you lay her down for sleep; however, if the infant is mobile and rolls over on her own, the baby can sleep in the position she chooses. You do not need to return her to a back sleeping position.
 - Waterbeds, couches, soft mattresses, pillows, beanbags, and other soft surfaces should not be used as infant sleeping surfaces.
 - If a playpen is used, do not add any extra mattresses, cushions, or soft bedding. Use only the mattress or pad provided by the manufacturer of the playpen.
2. **Make sure crib or playpen is safe and approved by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.**
3. **Do not allow infants to sleep in car seats, swings, and bouncy chairs.**
 - When infants sleep in car seats, bouncy chairs, swings, etc., the downward bending of the neck and head compress the airway, thus decreasing the amount of air the infant is able to breathe in.
 - Infants sleeping in car seats, swings, or bouncy chairs, also raises a safety concern because the infants are not well protected from the other children's activity in these devices.
 - Sleeping in positional devices contribute to positional skull deformities in infants.
 - Keeping infants in positional devices delays proper development - infants need to be on the floor to work on their physical development, they need to interact with other children for their social development, and they need to be held for their emotional development.
4. **Encourage tummy time when infant is awake and supervised.**
 - This strengthens neck and shoulder muscles, encourages rolling over and crawling.
5. **Remove pillows, heavy blankets, fluffy comforters, sheepskins, bumper pads, stuffed toys, and other soft items from the crib.**
6. **Only use tight-fitting FITTED crib or playpen sheets to cover the mattress or pad. Do not use flat sheets, blankets, or fitted sheets that are the wrong size.**
7. **If using a blanket, place the infant with her feet at the foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the crib mattress, reaching only as far as the infant's chest. Make sure the infant's arms are not tucked under the blanket.**
8. **Make sure the infant's head remains uncovered during sleep.**
9. **Don't let the infant get too warm during sleep.**
 - Don't over-layer the infant with clothing or blankets.
 - Keep the room temperature at 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit (F).
10. **Consider offering a pacifier (with parent's permission) when placing an infant down for sleep. Once infant falls asleep and it falls out, it does not have to be reinserted. Always inspect pacifier for tears.**
11. **Remove bibs, necklaces, hooded sweatshirts, and hats before laying infant down for sleeping.**
12. **Do not let babies sleep or play in a room where smoking is allowed at any time.**
13. **Always use a baby monitor when not in room with infants while they are sleeping. Caregivers should also frequently enter nap rooms to check on the infants while they are sleeping.**
14. **Do not allow infants to share a crib, even if they are siblings or twins.**
15. **Know and practice CPR.**
16. **Never use positioning devices, unless ordered by a health care provider.**
 - Devices have not been tested for safety and are not approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
 - Pillows or rolled up blankets used as positioning devices pose a risk of covering the infant's face when she moves around during sleep.
17. **Support breastfeeding.**
18. **Encourage regular check-ups and immunizations.**
19. **Set a policy on infant sleep position.**
 - Put your policy in writing and give a copy to parents.
 - Inform all staff, including substitutes and volunteers, of your policy on the first day of employment/volunteering.