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➔ **Sweet Dreams**  
Pacifiers help lower the risk of SIDS.

**ASK YOUR DOCTOR**

**Q** When can I place my baby on his tummy?

Give your baby “tummy time” during the day while he’s awake. SIDS risk rises significantly if you put him on his stomach during a nap, even if you usually put him on his back at night.

**Q** What raises the risk for SIDS?

Preterm infants have a greater risk, as do babies whose mothers smoked during or after pregnancy.

**Q** I’m breastfeeding. What if I fall asleep with the baby in my bed?

Breastfeeding helps protect your baby from SIDS. In case you doze off, keep the bed clear of pillows and blankets, and don’t breastfeed at night on a sofa or armchair.

**Q** Some mattress labels say they are designed to reduce SIDS.

Do you recommend them?

No scientific evidence supports the benefits of special mattresses, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

BABY

# Safe Slumbers

For the first year of an infant’s life, good sleep-time habits are key. One bit of new advice encourages parents to let a baby sleep in their room but not in their bed

ABOUT 3,500 BABIES IN THE U.S. DIE SUDDENLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY IN their sleep every year. But keeping your baby near you in a safe crib or bassinet can cut the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) by half.

“Being in the same room with their parents is protective for babies,” says Fern Hauck, MD, a family medicine physician and SIDS researcher at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She helped draft the new SIDS policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which calls for room-sharing until a baby is at least 6 months old.

In the struggle to get a baby to sleep, parents often resort to unsafe practices. Researchers put cameras in the homes of infants and found that

nine in 10 parents placed something in the crib that could be dangerous, such as a blanket or toy. Some babies often ended up sleeping in a car seat, baby swing, adult bed, or sofa—all of which raise the risk of SIDS.

SIDS occurs most often in the first four months of life, but pediatricians recommend these safe sleep habits for the first year:

- **Put your baby on her back every time she goes to sleep.** However, if she rolls onto her stomach, you don’t need to flip her onto her back, Hauck says.
- **Use only a firm mattress with a fitted sheet.** Soft surfaces, such as memory foam, pillows, or a sofa, raise the risk of suffocation, as does bed-sharing—bringing the baby into an adult bed.
- **Move your baby to a crib if he falls asleep elsewhere.** As tempting as it is to leave a sleeping baby in the carrier or car seat, a flat surface, such as a crib or playpen, is safest.
- **Never put loose objects or bedding in the crib.** Even bumper pads and baby blankets pose a risk. Wearable blankets can keep your baby cozy and safe.
- **Breastfeeding and pacifiers get the green light.** Both lower the risk of SIDS.