

BREASTFEEDING & SAFE SLEEP



Congratulations on the choice to breastfeed your baby! Research has shown that babies who are breastfed or fed breast milk are at a lower risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) if safe sleep practices are followed. Moms who choose to breastfeed can successfully breastfeed and follow safe sleep practices. Mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their infants as much and as long as possible.

It is important for your infant's safety that when the breastfeeding is complete, baby needs to be placed alone, on their back and in their crib for sleep. One study found that infants who are breastfed and are kept in bed with the mother to sleep (bed sharing) have nearly a 3X increased chance dying from SIDS than those breastfed infants who sleep in safe sleep environments. That means if you breastfeed and choose to sleep with the baby in your bed, you actually increase the risks for SIDS—nearly three times higher than if you put the baby in their own crib to sleep after breastfeeding. Protect your baby. Always follow the ABCs of Safe Sleep:



ALONE

Share the room,
not the bed



BACK

On their back
for nights and naps



CRIB

Clean, clear crib



DANGER

Be aware, know the
dangers beyond the crib

FACTS ON SIDS (SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME)

Every year in Maine, 10-12 infants die unexpectedly while sleeping. SIDS is the major cause of death in infants under 1 year of age. Many of these deaths are preventable by following the ABCs of Safe Sleep. Infants who died unexpectedly in their sleep had at least one unsafe risk factor in their sleep environment. These unsafe risk factors include: not putting baby to sleep on their back; sharing a bed with an adult or another child; sleeping on a surface not intended for infant sleep such as an adult bed, couch, car seat or swing; or having pillows, blankets or other soft bedding and toys in the crib.

Of these infant deaths, over half involved the baby sharing a sleep surface with an adult. Not putting your baby in their own safe sleep space after breastfeeding puts you at risk of falling asleep with your baby in the bed. An adult bed is never a safe place for a baby to sleep—the soft mattress, pillows, blankets, and sheets all increase the risk for suffocation. In addition, falling asleep with your baby in the same bed puts him or her at additional risk for suffocation asphyxiation, or entrapment. So when you begin to doze off, put the baby in their crib—you will both sleep better.

You keep your baby safe while traveling in a car by using an infant car seat. Use of car seats has dramatically reduced infant deaths in motor vehicle collisions. Keeping your baby safe in sleep by following the ABC's can dramatically reduce their risk of death from SIDS and suffocation. An infant is much more likely to die in a sleep-related death than in a motor vehicle collision.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BREASTFEEDING AND CO-SLEEPING

MYTH: “Breastfeeding in bed promotes bonding”

FACT: Breastfeeding does promote bonding, and there is nothing wrong with breastfeeding in bed when you are awake, but once you are ready to go back to sleep or are feeling drowsy, baby needs to go back to his or her own safe sleep space, alone and on their back. If you are worried about falling asleep while breastfeeding, set an alarm for 20 minutes. This will wake you up if you do fall asleep.

MYTH: “Co-sleeping is bonding. What is wrong with that?”

FACT: Bonding does not occur while you are asleep and the baby is sleeping. Bonding happens when you and the baby are awake and interacting during normal everyday activities like feeding, bathing, and playing. Your baby is much smaller and weaker than an adult. If the adult or blankets or pillows move over your baby, your baby is not strong enough to move away from those dangers.

MYTH: “Losing my baby to SIDS will never happen to me”

FACT: In Maine, we lose multiple babies each year in sleep-related deaths. Most of these deaths were from unsafe sleep. Is your baby's life worth the risk? Your baby needs to sleep alone, on its back and in a clean clear crib.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE SLEEP AND BREASTFEEDING

- Babies should always sleep alone. They should sleep close to their parents by sharing a room, but not the bed. Sharing a bed with a sleeping adult puts the baby at risk for suffocation and overlay.
- Babies should always sleep on their back for every sleep period, both nights and naps.
- Babies need their own Safe Sleep Space. A crib, bassinet or portable playard with a firm, flat mattress (one designed for that device) and a snug fitting crib sheet, without any added soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads or toys.
- Breastfeeding can be done in the adult bed when mom is awake. Make sure the baby is placed back in his/her Safe Sleep Space, such as a crib when the feeding is finished.
- Babies should use footed sleeper, or a sleep sack, or gown for added warmth if needed.

Visit [SafeSleepForME.org](https://www.SafeSleepForME.org) for more information

