

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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## SAFE SLEEPING PRACTICES FOR INFANTS

Each year, approximately seventy (70) seemingly healthy babies, die unexpectedly from unsafe sleep practices and suffocation. Unsafe sleeping practice is the leading *preventable* cause of death for infants during the first year of life in Los Angeles County.

### Why are babies helpless?

Newborn babies lack the ability to breathe through their mouths. They can only breathe through their noses.

A baby's neck muscles are underdeveloped so they do not have the ability to push away from surfaces that obstruct their noses.

### Bed Sharing (Co-Sleeping)

In some cultures, it is quite common for families to sleep together; however several factors makes this a dangerous practice for babies. A baby can suffocate in less than one minute and a parent and/or caregiver will not hear a baby suffocate. The softness of a mattress, heavy blankets, and big pillows can all suffocate a baby. There is a greater danger of suffocation if the parent or caregiver falls asleep and accidentally pulls blankets over the baby or allows the baby's face to move into their body, mattress, or pillows.

### Unsafe Sleep Surfaces and Environments

Babies need their own sleeping space such as a crib, portable crib such as a pack and play or bassinet. Nothing should be placed with the baby in the crib, pack and play, or bassinet, including toys, soft or loose bedding, pillows, blankets, or bumper pads.

Baby Boxes, strollers, couches, recliners, easy chairs, swings, soft mattress, and car seats are all considered unsafe sleep surfaces that can result in suffocation.

### Unsafe Sleep Positions

A common misconception is that babies should be placed to sleep on their stomach or side to prevent them from choking. When babies sleep on their stomach or side, they are at an increased risk of choking on their spit-up or vomit.

Although babies can roll over consistently around four to seven months old, parents and/or caregivers should still always place babies on their back when putting them to sleep.



If you have any questions regarding this release please e-mail your question to:

[Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov)

**Practice Tips**

During home visits, investigations and on-going assessments, talk to parents and/or caregivers about the following:

- Babies should always be placed on their back for bedtime and naps;
- Babies must be put on a firm surface to sleep, preferably a mattress with just a fitted sheet;
- There should be nothing in a crib except a crib sheet attached snugly to the mattress;
- Unsafe sleeping surfaces;
- Dangers of bedsharing;
- Advise parents and/or caregivers to avoid overheating baby with multiple layers of clothing, heavy blankets, or overly warm rooms

Please be culturally sensitive when discussing unsafe sleeping practices with the Caregiver.

**Resources**

<http://safesleepforbaby.com/>



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