

# The **Ultimate** Safe Sleep Guide

Must-Know Information for Your Baby's 1st Year



# Our Mission

At Tinyhood, we believe families thrive when they have the information they need to make decisions that are right for them. And it's our mission to make accessing that information easier than ever.

We've brought together the world's leading parenting experts to create a one-stop shop for parenting advice. Through on-demand classes, downloadable handouts, and expert articles, we break down parenting's trickiest topics and provide step-by-step solutions. Everything can be watched or read on your time, at your own pace.

TLDR; Tinyhood is parenting for the modern age.

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# Introduction

There's nothing cuter than a sleeping baby. But let's face it, newborn sleep looks a LOT different than it did when we were kids, and there have been updates made in even the past few years to help keep babies safe and reduce preventable sleep-related deaths. This guide covers everything you (and your baby's caregivers!) need to know about safe sleep.

## What Is Safe Sleep?

When we talk about "Safe Sleep" what are we trying to keep our babies safe from, exactly?

**Safe sleep means putting your baby to bed in ways that protect them from dangers like SIDS, strangulation, or suffocation.**

SIDS, also known as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, refers to the unexplained death of a baby younger than a year old, and it typically happens while babies are asleep. Though SIDS is not due to accidental suffocation or strangulation, those can also happen when babies are sleeping.

Luckily, certain practices can reduce the risk of these dangers and create safe spaces & environments for babies to sleep. These practices are the basis for the safe sleep guidelines put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and they are what we are sharing in this guide.



# What Is a Safe Sleep Environment?

While the exact cause of SIDS remains unknown and it cannot be prevented with 100% certainty, research suggests that a safe sleep environment can help reduce a [baby's risk of SIDS](#) as well as deaths due to accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed. **In short, a safe sleep environment lowers the risk of all infant sleep-related deaths.**

## WHAT A SAFE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT LOOKS LIKE

- **Baby is on a firm sleep surface.** A firm surface does not indent when your baby is lying on it. So this typically means a standard crib mattress WITHOUT toppers or pads. If you do use a cover to protect against diaper leaks, ensure that it is tight-fitting and thin, like a fitted sheet.
- **Baby is on a flat sleep surface.** Sleep products that create an incline are not safe. There should be NO incline in baby's sleep surface.
- **Baby is sleeping on a mattress that is made for your specific crib, bassinet, or play yard.** This ensures the mattress fits snugly into the crib, with no gaps between the mattress and the sides of the crib, bassinet, or play yard. Gaps can increase your baby's risk of suffocation and injury.

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- **Baby's sleeping space and mattress meet safety standards.** Not every crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard meets the safety standards outlined by the [Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#). Make sure yours does. If it doesn't, or if it has been recalled for whatever reason, do NOT use it for infant sleep. If your crib is not new, you'll also want to make sure it has instructions, all its hardware, and it is not broken.

- » In 2021, the CPSC issued new safety standards requiring all infant sleep products to meet federal safety standards for cribs, bassinets, portable cribs, and play yards. These standards apply to things like [inclined sleep products](#), in-bed sleepers, baby pods, travel bassinets, and more. Check ANY products you plan to use for sleep to see if they meet safety requirements. If they don't, do not use them for infant sleep.

- **Baby is sleeping in an empty crib.** Your baby's crib should ONLY include a mattress and a tight-fitted sheet. Do NOT use any of the following in the crib:

- » Soft objects like stuffed animals and pillows
- » Loose bedding like blankets and sheets
- » Toys
- » Bumpers, pads, or other products that attach to the sides of the crib

- **There are no strangulation hazards within reach of the crib.** Common strangulation hazards include dangling cords, wires, and window coverings with cords or strings. These should all be kept well out of arm's reach from your baby's crib or other sleeping space, like a bassinet or play yard.

In an emergency, the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) does say alternative sleeping spaces, like a box or empty laundry basket, are okay to use temporarily, so long as the bottom is firm and flat and has thin padding. As soon as you can, though, you will want to move your baby to a CPSC-approved space.



# The Importance of Back to Sleep

Now that we've covered how to prepare your baby's safe sleep space, let's talk about how to safely place them in it for naptime or night sleep.

According to the AAP, the **ONLY** safe position for babies to sleep is on their back. This means **you should place your baby on their back for all naps & night sleep**. It is no longer considered safe to place your baby on their stomach or side since babies who sleep on their sides can more easily roll onto their stomachs.

## COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT BACK TO SLEEP

### **“Is it safe to lay my newborn on my chest?”**

Yes. More than that, it is recommended as part of skin-to-skin contact. If your baby falls asleep on your chest, that's okay, too, so long as you do not fall asleep. You should always be wide awake and monitoring your baby while they are on your chest. If you ever start to feel drowsy or need to take care of another need, get up and place your baby in their safe sleep space. Never fall asleep with a baby on your chest.

### **“Is it okay for premature babies to sleep on their back?”**

Yes, once they are home, premature babies should be placed on their backs to sleep. If your baby was in the NICU, they may have slept on their stomachs, but this is because they are under constant medical supervision, and NICU nurses do move babies onto their backs before discharge. Premature babies should NOT be placed on their stomachs at home for sleep, and safe sleep should be a part of the discussion with your care team at discharge.

### **“Can my baby choke if they spit up while asleep on their back?”**

No! To quote the AAP directly, “Your baby's airway anatomy and their gag reflex will keep that from happening. Even babies with [gastroesophageal reflux disease \(GERD\)](#) should sleep flat on their backs.”

### **“When can I stop putting my baby to sleep on their back?”**

You should always place your baby on their back to sleep. They may roll onto their stomach on their own while falling asleep or in their sleep. Once your baby can comfortably roll in both directions (back to tummy and tummy to back), they can sleep on their stomach and there is no need to go in and reposition them or flip them over. This typically happens between 4-6 months of age, but can happen sooner. Remember, you should always place your baby down on their back to sleep, even once they can roll.



# Swaddling & Safe Sleep

Swaddles are safe sleep-approved, and more than that, many experts recommend them for the newborn stage. They give your baby that cozy, womb-like feeling and prevent the startle reflex from waking them up.

## TIPS TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE SWADDLING SAFELY

- **Your baby should always be on their back when swaddled.** They should be monitored so they don't roll over.
- **Make sure the swaddle is thin and cannot become unwrapped and cover the baby's face or nose.** This increases the risk of suffocation.
- **Do not cover your swaddled baby with a loose blanket.**
- **Do not use a weighted swaddle.**
- **Ensure the swaddle is not too tight.** The swaddle should not be so constricting that it makes it difficult for your baby to breathe or freely move their hips.
- **Avoid dressing your baby too warmly underneath the swaddle.** We will discuss how to dress your baby for sleep next, but you will know your baby is too hot if they are sweating or breathing rapidly or have damp hair, flushed cheeks, or a heat rash.
- **Stop swaddling as soon as your baby shows signs of starting to roll over.** This can happen as early as 2 months of age.
- **Remember, no loose blankets in the crib!** Once your baby transitions out of the swaddle, you can dress your child in a non-weighted and sleeveless sleep sack or wearable blanket, so long as they allow your baby to move freely and roll.

# Dressing Baby for Sleep

Another important part of safe sleep is dressing your baby for sleep. While most of us worry about our babies being too cold, being too warm and overheating has also been shown to increase the likelihood of SIDS, especially for newborns who cannot regulate their own body temperature.

## TO KEEP YOUR BABY COZY, BUT NOT TOO HOT

- ❑ **Dress baby in only one more layer than you would wear to be comfortable.** Some signs of an overheated baby include sweating, a hot chest, or flushed skin.
- ❑ **Do not let your baby sleep in a hat while indoors.** Once home from the hospital, your baby does not need to wear a hat indoors. In fact, doing so can increase your baby's risk of overheating.
- ❑ **Use layers of clothing, a sleep sack, or a wearable blanket for warmth.** If you are concerned about baby being cold, you can add layers to their clothing or use a wearable blanket. Remember, as a general rule, baby should wear only one more layer than you are wearing.
- ❑ **Do not use any blankets, sleep sacks, or swaddles that are weighted.** These can increase your baby's risk of SIDS by making it harder for them to wake themselves.







## Room Share — But Don't Bed Share

The AAP recommends that your baby sleep in the same room as you for the first 6 months of life. But room sharing is not the same as bed sharing!

While your baby should sleep in a crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard in your room and close to your bed, they should not sleep in your bed under any circumstances.

Room sharing can [decrease the risk of SIDS by as much as 50%](#). It also makes it easier to care for, feed, comfort, and watch your baby overnight. Bed sharing, on the other hand, can increase the risk of accidental suffocation.

**The AAP recommends parents do NOT share a bed with their baby under any circumstances. If you bring your baby into bed to feed them or care for them in any way, place them back in their own sleep space before you go to sleep.**

If there is a possibility you might fall asleep while baby is in your bed, the [AAP says](#) to make sure there is nothing like pillows, blankets, or sheets nearby that could suffocate them. As soon as you wake, move baby back to their own sleep space.

Also, never fall asleep with your baby on other soft surfaces like couches or armchairs. This also increases the risk of suffocation and other injury.

**The rules we've outlined here become extra important if:**

- You have been drinking alcohol, using marijuana, or have taken medications or illicit drugs. [Research](#) suggests that the risk of sleep-related death is more than 10 times higher for babies who share a bed with someone who is tired, has taken medications that make it harder for them to wake up, or has used alcohol or drugs.
- Your baby is born [premature](#), is a newborn, or is very small. Research suggests the risk of sleep-related deaths while bed-sharing is [5-10 times higher for babies under four months of age](#). It is [2-3 times higher for babies born prematurely](#) and those born with low birth weight.



## Safe Sleep Outside of the Crib

Young babies sleep a LOT. Which means they will probably fall asleep in the stroller and in the car at some point. While this is fine while they are in transit, they need to be moved to a safe sleep space as soon as possible upon arrival at your destination. You may also want to have a space for them in the living room where they can safely nap during the day.

Having a safe sleep environment in your living space won't just give you peace of mind when baby is napping; it can also be a safe place to put your newborn down for a few minutes when they are awake and you need to prepare dinner (or reheat your coffee for the third time).

But finding safe, secondary sleep spaces can be tricky because things that might look cozy, like baby docks and swings, are actually unsafe for sleep. There are, however, portable sleepers available that follow all the current safe sleep guidelines. If you are looking for a place for your baby to nap outside of the nursery, use one of these portable sleepers.

While it's okay for babies to sleep in spaces that are not in their crib or bedroom bassinet, there are some extra precautions to keep in mind to ensure their safety.

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**Remember:**

- If your baby falls asleep in their car seat, stroller, carrier, or swing, they must be monitored at all times and should be moved to a firm sleep surface as soon as possible.
- Don't use products for sleep that are not specifically designed for infant sleep. This includes things like nursing pillows, baby docks, and cushioned mats.
- If you need financial assistance to secure a safe sleep environment, reach out to your local social services agency.

**Our Picks**



**Cosco Kids™ Sleepaway Bassinet**

We love this bassinet because it provides a safe sleep space for those first few months when your baby is still room-sharing. It has a cozy yet firm padded mattress and breathable mesh sides. It's also super light! Weighing only 14 pounds, it's easy enough to move this from room to room so your baby can nap anywhere.



**Cosco Kids™ Rocking Bassinet with Play Yard DLX**

This play yard is incredible for those babies who need to be rocked to sleep! It comes with a bassinet that not only meets all the CPSC recommendations for safe sleep, but can actually rock them safely while they sleep (unlike alternatives like swings which aren't approved for sleep). When your baby is too big for a bassinet, it can be used as a travel crib or a safe place to play when you need a few minutes to yourself. It also folds up super compactly and comes with its own carrying case, so it's easy to throw into your trunk whenever you are away from home.

**SPECIAL OFFER:** Save 20% off these and all baby essentials from [Safety 1st](#) with code **THSLEEP20**.

**Terms & Conditions:** Expires May 25, 2025

# Creating a Sleep-Friendly Environment

We've talked a lot about how you can create a safe sleep space that reduces the risk of SIDS, suffocation, and other injuries. Now, let's talk about how you can also create a space that's conducive to sleep and gets everyone the rest they deserve.

When it comes to a sleep-conducive environment, you want to focus on 3 things: darkness, sound, and temperature. Here's how to do that safely.

	✓ Do	✗ Don't
Darkness	Use blackout curtains to help create a dark, non-stimulating space for your baby to sleep.	Try to train your baby to sleep in a well-lit room. Between 2-3 months of age, baby's curiosity and awareness are increasing, so a bright room can be especially stimulating as they try to wind down to sleep.
Sound	Use white noise from a <a href="#">sound machine</a> or fan to help block out disruptive sounds that could wake your baby. Just make sure it isn't too loud or right next to their head as white noise can damage hearing.	Play music. Sudden changes in the sound could wake a sleeping baby. Stick with repetitive sounds like static or heartbeat.
Temperature	Keep your baby's sleep space cool since body temperatures rise while we sleep. Aim for 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit.	Judge your baby's temperature by feeling their hands and feet. Their developing circulatory systems can cause hands or feet to feel cold, even if their core temperature is quite warm. Instead, feel the base of their neck to assess if they are too hot or cold.

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## Baby Monitors

Baby monitors give parents peace of mind while minimizing potential disruptions. They allow you to check in on your baby without entering the room! Video monitors allow you to not only hear, but see what baby is up to, and some even allow you to talk to your baby without entering the room (which is an awesome feature as they approach toddlerhood!).

### Our Picks



#### **Safety 1st's Smart Soother**

Every baby is different. This means different babies like different sounds to lull them to sleep. The Smart Soother offers a variety of white noises, nature sounds, and soft lullabies, so you can find what works best for your baby. It also has different soft light colors, so you can have a night light for middle-of-the-night changes that won't be distracting when your baby sleeps. And best of all? It's all controlled by your phone, and you can save your child's favorite presets!



#### **Safety 1st's 360 Smart Baby Monitor**

If you're going to get a video monitor, you want that picture to be CRYSTAL clear. This monitor offers HD live streams with detailed night vision. You can also pan, tilt, and zoom right from your phone, so you will always see exactly what your baby is up to.

You can see the temperature and humidity to make sure your baby is sleeping comfortably right on your phone. You can even be alerted when your baby cries through cry detection and soothe them using the built-in lullabies, white noise, or the two-way talk.

**BONUS:** Both Safety 1st's sound machine and monitor use the Safety 1st Connected App, which lets you create the optimal environment, set the mood, monitor, and comfort your child from anywhere.

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# A Safe Sleep Checklist

## Positioning

- ❑ Back to sleep for every sleep
- ❑ Once baby can roll from tummy to back and back to tummy, they can remain in the tummy position if they roll over during sleep, but must be placed on their back when put to sleep

## Sleep Surface

- ❑ Flat sleep surface
- ❑ Firm sleep surface that does not indent or conform to baby's head when baby is placed on it
- ❑ Fitted sheet
- ❑ No other bedding, pillows, or soft objects like stuffed animals
- ❑ Mattress fits snugly with no gaps between the wall of the crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard

## Dressing Baby

- ❑ Dress baby in one layer more than you are comfortably wearing
- ❑ No loose blankets, wearable ones are fine
- ❑ Avoid hats, bows, and headbands
- ❑ Do not use weighted blankets, sleep sacks, or swaddles

## Sleep Spaces

- ❑ No bumper pads or products that attach to crib slats and sides
- ❑ Strollers, swings, car seats, carriers, and other devices are not recommended for routine sleep. When baby falls asleep in these devices they should be moved to a crib or other, safe, flat sleep space as soon as it's safe and practical to do so.
- ❑ Room share until baby is 6 months of age
- ❑ Never share a sleep space
- ❑ Crib is empty of any soft objects like pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, etc. Crib should only have a tight, fitted sheet.

*This guide covers the basics of safe sleep for infants under 1. Talk to your pediatrician if you have any questions or concerns about these recommendations. For the most up-to-date guidelines and recommendations refer to the American Academy of Pediatrics.*

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