

Co-Sleeping with Your Baby — Is it Safe?

A recent study of moms involved in the Women, Infant and Children's program (WIC) reports that 32.5% shared a bed with their infant. Some do not have a baby bed. Other parents believe that co-sleeping is good for babies.

However, new research shows that sharing a bed with an infant is a known risk factor for SIDS – Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) warn parents that infants can suffocate. An infant can:

- Get trapped between a mattress and headboard,
- Be pushed up against a bed and wall,
- Lie face down on a water bed or regular mattress, or
- Sleep face down on soft bedding - pillows, blankets or quilts.

Also, a baby's body can slip through the bed frame. The frame can trap the head, and the baby can strangle and die.



Sleeping with a baby on a couch or armchair is also very dangerous. A baby's body is tiny. Parents and caregivers can easily roll over onto the baby. The body, pillow, or soft material can trap the baby's face. A heavy arm across a tiny chest can interfere with a baby's breathing.


Other reported sleep hazards include:

- Putting babies to sleep on their side or stomach,
- Allowing babies to sleep in swings,
- Letting babies sleep on an adults shoulder,
- Smoking around a baby, or
- Using alcohol or drugs like marijuana while caring for your baby.

The safest place for your infant to sleep is in a crib. The AAP recommends that infants sleep in a crib in the parent's room. To keep baby safe while sleeping, always:

- Place your infant on her back to sleep,
- Use a crib that meets current safety standards,
- Remove soft objects and all loose bedding from the crib, and
- Use a firm mattress like a crib mattress.

In the U.S., two-thirds of babies under 12 months spend time in non-parental child care. Talk to your baby's caretakers about these hazards. Never assume that people know safe sleeping rules. Share this article with them.

 See the May/June 2008 *babyTIME* article in PHL's *familyTIME* newsletter. Log onto www.parenthelpline.org for more information.