



*The St. Joseph County Department of Health presents*

# GIVE YOUR BABY ROOM TO BREATHE

With the ABCs



**Alone, on their Back, in their Crib**



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**This booklet provides an overview of safe sleep practices to reduce your baby's risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID).**

It contains important information for anyone who takes care of an infant, including parents, grandparents, family, and friends, to help give babies room to breathe--every nap, every night, every time.

**From 2018-2022,  
40 infants died in St. Joseph County.**

**30 of these deaths were preventable.**

**Sleep-related Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUIDs)  
accounted for 21 of them.<sup>1</sup>**

These deaths involved accidents where the baby could not breathe properly due to unsafe sleeping practices.<sup>1</sup>

Setting up a safe sleep area and correctly laying your baby down to sleep can lower their SUID risk.<sup>2</sup>



Let's start with the  
**ABCs of Safe Sleep**





ST. JOSEPH COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

# GIVE YOUR BABY ROOM TO BREATHE

Babies should **ALWAYS** sleep **A**lone, on their **B**ack, in a **C**rib



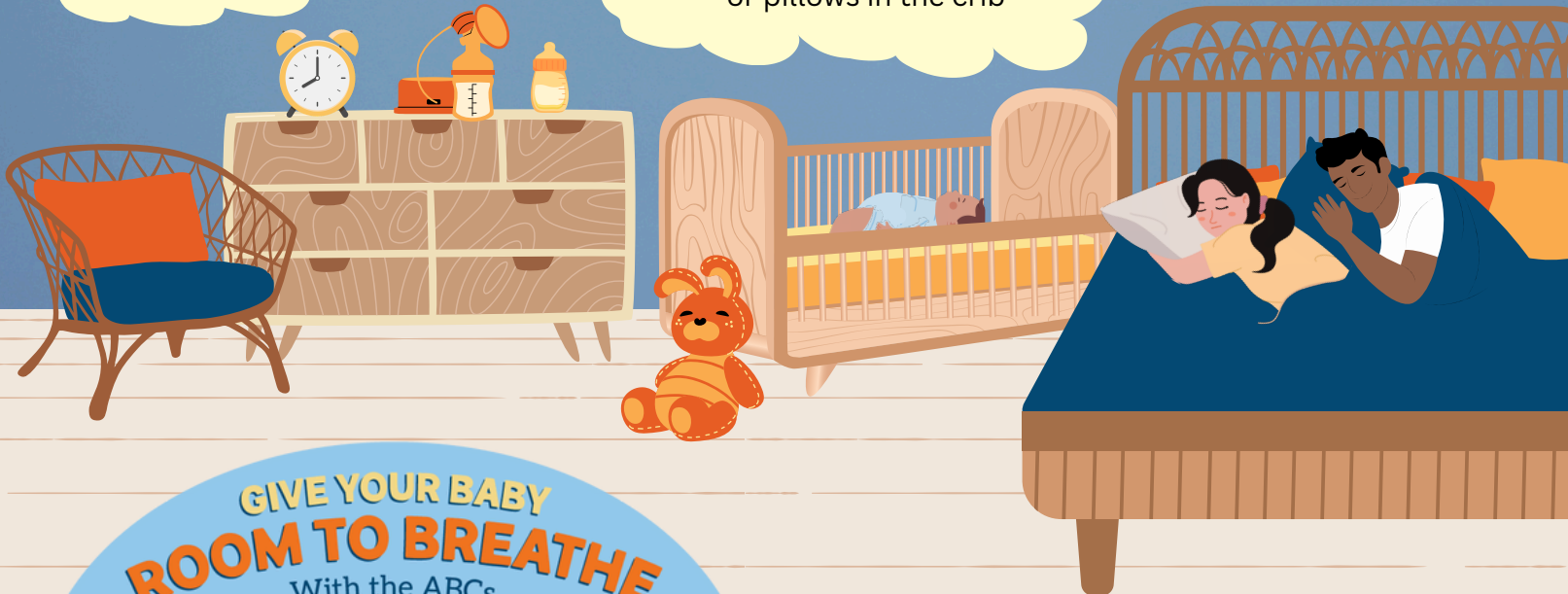
Keep your baby away from all  
types of smoke



Breastfeed sitting up,  
and set an alarm if  
you're tired

No toys, blankets, bedding,  
or pillows in the crib

Room-share,  
don't bed-share



GIVE YOUR BABY  
**ROOM TO BREATHE**  
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For more information:



(574)-235-9750, Opt 8



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# A is for Alone

**Always put your baby to sleep alone in their own sleeping space. They should never share a bed with adults, other children, or pets.<sup>3</sup>**

## **Bed sharing is SUID risk factor:<sup>3</sup>**

- Babies are very small and can get tangled, strangled, or smothered easily.
- Sleeping next to other people is dangerous, as they may accidentally roll over onto the baby.
- Bed sharing increases the risk of the baby falling or getting trapped.



## **To reduce your baby's risk of suffocation:**

**Never** put soft bedding, comforters, pillows, loose sheets, blankets, sheepskins, toys, positioners, or bumpers in the crib with your baby.<sup>3</sup>

**Do NOT bed share.** Always put your baby to sleep in a separate, but close-by, safe place to sleep. Babies should never sleep on the same furniture as you, other adults or children, or pets. If you have twins, each baby should have its own crib.<sup>3</sup>



**Don't breastfeed in bed.** Always breastfeed in a supportive, upright chair, and put the baby back in their own crib when you are done.<sup>4</sup>

- It's important to stay awake while breastfeeding. If you fall asleep, your baby can become lodged between your body parts or between you and the chair.
- If you are feeling tired and think you may fall asleep, try setting a timer!





# is for on their **Back**

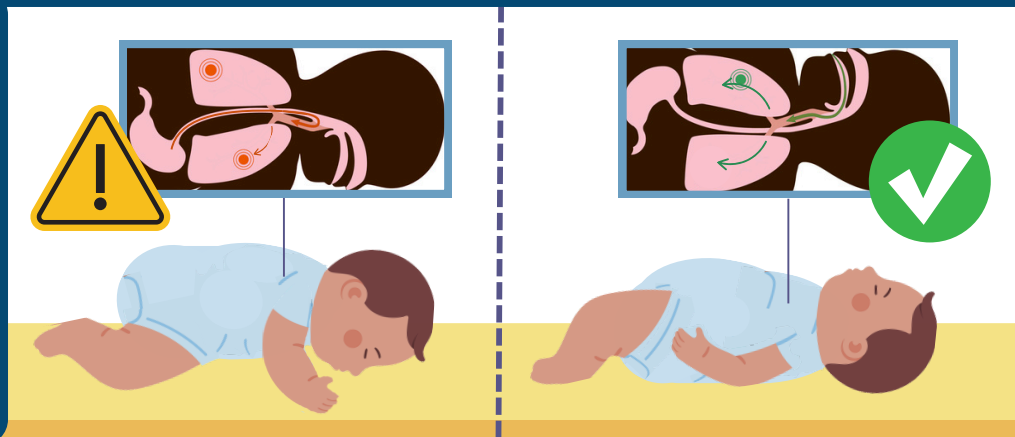
**Always place your baby on their back every time they sleep, including bedtime and naps.<sup>2</sup>**

**Keeping your baby on their back is important to help them breathe.<sup>5</sup>**

- Sleeping on their stomach, side, or while sitting upright can cause your baby's face to become covered or their airway to close.<sup>2,5,6</sup>
- A baby's airway is very small and fragile, about the size of a drinking straw.<sup>7</sup> If the baby is not positioned correctly, it can cause their airway to close (like a kink in a hose), which stops air from going into their lungs.<sup>2,6</sup>

**Stomach sleeping could cause the baby to choke on vomit or spit up.<sup>2</sup>**

Babies have a reflex to keep their airway clear when they are placed on their back.<sup>5</sup>



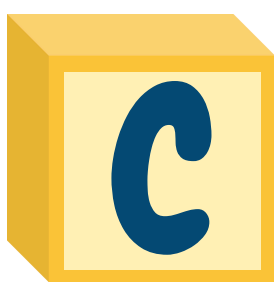
**Babies should always be placed on their backs to sleep until they are 12 months old.<sup>5</sup>**

Once your baby can roll over on their own, it's okay if they roll to their side or stomach during sleep; you don't need to reposition them.<sup>2</sup> However, you should stop swaddling as soon as your baby shows any sign of rolling over, so they don't get stuck face-down.<sup>9</sup>

## **Supervised tummy time**

If you are afraid of your baby getting a flat spot on their head, start tummy time! Tummy time is when you place a baby on their stomach while they are awake.<sup>9</sup> Always stay with your baby and watch them while they do tummy time. This will help them to build the muscles they need for healthy development and reduce the chance that the baby will get flat spots and bald spots on their head.<sup>2,5</sup>





# C is for in a Crib

**Your baby should always sleep in their own space on a firm, flat, and level surface.<sup>2,5</sup>**

**Babies should always be put to sleep on a firm surface in their own space.<sup>5</sup>**

A baby sleeping face-down can sink into soft cushions/bedding or roll onto other items in the crib, which can cover their face and cause them to stop breathing.<sup>5</sup>



**Babies should NEVER sleep:<sup>5</sup>**

- On soft surfaces, like memory foam
- With anything else in the crib, like bumper pads, pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, toys, or supplies, like diapers and diaper wipes
- On adult beds, couches, or armchairs
- In car seats, swings, or Boppys
  - If they fall asleep while in unsafe place, move them to a safe space right away

**A safe sleeping space:<sup>2,5,10</sup>**

- Is a firm, flat, and level surface
  - A safety-approved mattress must be the correct size and covered with ONLY a tightly fitted sheet
- Is in a safety-approved crib, bassinet, or play yard
- Is empty of all other items
- Has sides that do not drop down
  - If the sides have spindles, they should be tightly spaced.
- Is for the baby only and is not shared with family, siblings, or pets
- Is in a hazard-free area, away from window cords or wires



## In addition to practicing the ABCs of Safe Sleep, here are some other ways you can reduce the risk your baby's SUID risk:

### **Feed your baby breast milk;**

it may help to lower the risk of SUID.<sup>11</sup>

### **Once breastfeeding is firmly established, introduce a pacifier**

Offering a pacifier at bedtime and naptime can reduce the risk of SUID. Do not force the pacifier or reinsert it if it falls out once the baby is asleep. Never coat the pacifier with anything or use a pacifier that has a string or is connected to another object, like the baby's clothing or a toy.<sup>5</sup>



### **Never let anyone smoke around your baby**

SUID occurs more often in babies who are around smoke than in babies who have a smoke-free environment. This includes cigarette smoke, marijuana, or vaping. Babies can be affected by second- and thirdhand smoke in the house.<sup>5,12</sup>

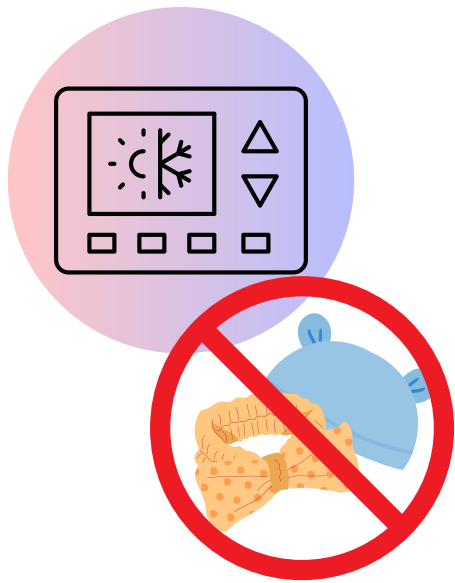
### **Avoid alcohol and drug use during pregnancy and after birth**

It can impair your ability to care for your baby and increase the risk of SUID.<sup>5,13</sup>

### **Be careful about exhaustion & drowsiness**

It's important to follow safe sleep practices even when you are tired or sleepy. Set easy-to-remember routines and use tools/habits to help keep you awake, like only feeding your baby in an upright chair, having a light snack, or setting an alarm.<sup>14</sup> If you have someone to help, don't be afraid to ask for support! If you take medication (prescription or over-the-counter), be cautious of any side effects that can make you drowsy. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions.<sup>13</sup>



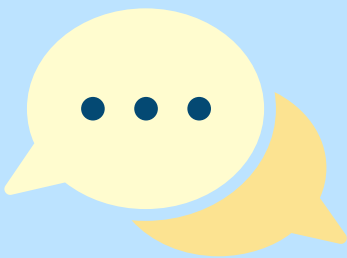


## Maintain a comfortable room temperature and avoid over-bundling<sup>5</sup>

Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult. Dress your baby lightly for sleep using a sleep sack or wearable blanket instead of loose blankets. Avoid covering your baby's head and face during sleep. Hats and bows can slip while the baby is sleeping, causing suffocation. Watch for signs of overheating, such as sweating, damp hair, flushed cheeks, heat rash, or rapid breathing.

## Times have changed


In the last 30 years, doctors have learned so much about how to keep babies safe while sleeping. Since the Safe to Sleep campaign started in 1990 teaching that babies should sleep on their backs, SUIDs have dropped by more than 50%.<sup>15</sup>



Take time to educate anyone who will care for your baby about the importance of the ABCs of safe sleep. Some traditional ways of caring may increase your baby's risks of SUID. You may need to approach these topics gently with some caregivers, but they need to be discussed. Remind them that new information shows that your baby is safest when the ABCs of safe sleep are followed. Caregivers, babysitters and family members should all be informed of the risks posed by side and stomach sleeping.<sup>15</sup>

## Contact the Saint Joseph County Department of Health for further information or educational programs.

Our EMBER classes (Empowering Moms and Babies with Education and Resources), are available for **FREE** to county residents!

 (574)-235-9750, Opt 8

 [MIH@SJCINDIANA.GOV](mailto:MIH@SJCINDIANA.GOV)

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