

# What Nurses Need to Know About Safe Sleep

As nurses, family and friends as well as your patients or clients often look to you for health information or guidance about many things. Caring for newborns is a topic people will often seek the advice of nurses to learn the most current information. Safe Sleep KY is a campaign from the Department for Public Health to provide you with up-to-date information about infant Safe Sleep. All of our guidance is in alignment with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) recommendations.

In 1994, the AAP first recommended putting infants on their back to sleep. Since that time, sleep-related deaths have been reduced by 50%. This is great progress but there is still more work to do. SIDS remains the leading cause of deaths from one month of age to one year of age. In Kentucky, we lose an infant in a sleep-related death about every 5 days. Sadly, most of these are preventable. Nine out of ten of these infants have at least one sleep-related risk factor documented. These risks include:

- The baby not being put on their back to sleep
- The baby sharing a bed with an adult or another child
- The baby sleeping on surfaces not designed for infant sleep such as a sofa or adult bed
- Hazards in the crib such as blankets and pillows, bumper pads or toys
- The baby sharing a bed with someone who

is using alcohol or drugs, including some prescription drugs

Of the sleep-related infant deaths in Kentucky in 2013, over half were sharing a bed with an adult or other person. This is a very dangerous practice and these deaths are preventable. In Kentucky, an infant is 70 times more likely to die from unsafe sleep than from a motor vehicle collision.





## **ALONE**

Stay Close,  
Sleep Apart



## **BACK**

On their Back for  
Nights and Naps



## **CRIB**

Clean, Clear Crib



## **DANGER**

Be Aware,  
Not Impaired

In Kentucky, babies have died because an impaired caregiver put the baby in bed with them to sleep. This is a very dangerous practice and can result in the death of the baby from suffocation. Taking pain or anxiety medication, using drugs, and/or drinking can all cause impairment which puts babies at risk.

- Babies should always sleep alone. They should sleep close to their parents by sharing the same room, but not the bed.
- Babies should always sleep on their back for every sleep period, both nights and naps.
- Babies need a clean, clear crib (bassinet or pack & play) for a Safe Sleep Space. The crib should have a firm mattress (fitted for that crib) and a snug fitting crib sheet and without soft bedding such as blanket, pillows, bumper pads or toys.
- Babies should use a footed sleeper, infant sleep sack or wearable blanket for added warmth if needed.
- Babies need “Tummy Time” every day while they are awake and an adult is watching them. This helps with muscle development.
- Drinking and drug use impair one’s ability to care for a baby, making bed-sharing and other unsafe sleep even more dangerous for the baby. It is important to be aware of people who may be using and to stress the Safe Sleep message.

As a nurse, being part of the solution is second

nature. We hope this information will be helpful with your efforts. You can take a free online training course for nurses provided by NICHD at [nichd.nih.gov/cbt/sids/nursecourse/Welcome](http://nichd.nih.gov/cbt/sids/nursecourse/Welcome). You can receive 1.1 CE for completing this. We also have a PowerPoint available for your use if you would like to talk with others about Safe Sleep. Just contact us at [SafeSleepKY@ky.gov](mailto:SafeSleepKY@ky.gov).

For more information and free downloadable information you can share with anyone who cares for an infant as well as professional information, visit our website at [SafeSleepKY.org](http://SafeSleepKY.org) or the National Safe to Sleep Campaign at [safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov](http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov).

