

## **Is sound asleep, safely asleep?**

If you or a family member cares for infants, this is an important question. The way a baby sleeps can reduce the baby's risk of dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. As a member of the Washington County Child Protection Citizen's Review Panel, I have learned more about how safe sleep practices could lead to a reduction of infant deaths. In the past three years, there have been 237 sudden, unexpected infant deaths (SUID) in Minnesota. More than half of these infants were found in unsafe sleep environments. Our Review Panel has made Safe Sleep Practices for Infants a key feature of our work this year.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other experts recommend the following safe sleep practices:

1. Always place babies to sleep on their backs during naps and at nighttime. We know that many parents in the past may not have placed babies on their backs for sleeping, but we now know this is the safest way for babies to sleep.
2. Baby should not sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, on a chair alone or with anyone else - adult or child.
3. Avoid letting a baby get too hot. Signs of a baby being too hot include: sweating, damp hair, flushed cheeks, heat rash and rapid breathing. The room temperature should be comfortable for a lightly-clothed adult.
4. Place babies in a safety-approved crib or play yard, on a firm mattress, covered by a fitted sheet and avoid having fluffy blankets, comforters, pillows, stuffed animals, or bumper pads in the crib with the baby. Sleep clothing such as sleepers, sleep sacks, or wearable blankets are safer for babies.
5. Consider using a pacifier at nap time and bedtime, but be sure it doesn't have cords or clips that might be a risk for strangulation.
6. Before leaving your baby in the care of anyone else, be sure that person agrees to follow safe sleep practices for your baby. If you are selecting child care for your infant, be sure to ask the care provider about their practices for ensuring safe sleep practices for your infant. If they are not familiar with these safe sleep practices, review these guidelines with them and request that they agree to follow these guidelines. All licensed family day care homes and child care centers are required to have training in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome prevention, but it is important that you make sure the provider is committed to using safe sleep practices with your baby.
7. Be an advocate for safe sleep practices! If you see displays or pictures of cribs with quilts, pillows, bumpers, or stuff animals, talk to the store manager or

send a letter to the media using the pictures to request their support in promoting safe sleep for infants. You can save a baby's life and that should help you sleep better too!

Marty Gerkey, Member of Washington County Child Protection Citizen Review Panel.

*For further information, contact Healthy Child Care America at the American Academy of Pediatrics at (<http://www.healthychildcare.org/sids.html>) or call 888-227-5409. The Minnesota Department of Health (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/mortality/safeandasleep/index.html>) has more information and brochures available upon request.*

*The Minnesota SID Center, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota also contributed to the article. ([www.childrensmn.org/sidcenter](http://www.childrensmn.org/sidcenter))*

*If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Washington County Child Protection Citizen Review Panel, visit the Washington County website: <http://www.co.washington.mn.us/index.aspx?NID=1549>  
Or, call Don Pelton, Community Services Supervisor, at 651-430-6631.*