

Prevention of SIDS

Although there's no proven way to prevent SIDS, the suggestions below may help.

- If you notice any breathing stoppages or "blue spells," get immediate medical attention.
- If you notice a pause longer than ten seconds in your baby's breathing, wake him or her up with a small jolt or flick of your finger to the foot. If this doesn't set the baby breathing again, the next step is more vigorous stimulation such as a pinch. If that doesn't work, give the baby mouth-to-mouth and get someone to call 911. Never shake the baby.
- During the pregnancy, make sure that the mother-to-be receives good medical care and adequate nutrition.

Above-SIDS Risks

Babies seem to be above-SIDS risks when the following are present:

- In winter time
- If their mothers smoke cigarettes during pregnancy or after pregnancy
- If their mothers are drug addicts
- If babies are overweight at birth, slow to gain weight or premature – especially with lung disorders
- If parts of the baby's brain that regulate breathing remain immature

If your baby has died of SIDS

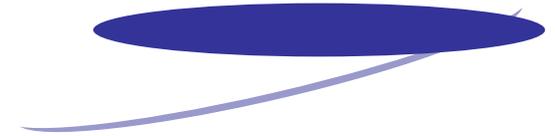
It is important to remember that following these tips can reduce the risk of SIDS but can not prevent all SIDS deaths. The cause or causes of SIDS are still not known and parents of a child who has died from SIDS should not think that their child care practices caused their baby's death.

If you have lost a baby to SIDS, try to remember that all cases of SIDS cannot be prevented. Remember, there are people who can help you during your time of grief. Your doctor, public health nurse or minister can help you find counseling or a parent support group with people who have experienced similar child loss, who can support you and be with you and your family.

When a SIDS death occurs, there is no rational explanation. All sorts of emotions can surface at this time. Feelings of guilt are common in many parents and caregivers. They find it difficult to believe that they are not responsible in some way – but they are not.

It's crucial for parents and caregivers to:

- Speak to each other about their feelings
- Find out the facts about SIDS
- Talk to other people who have experienced a SIDS death
- Seek professional counseling in order to express and explore their feelings



Sudden Infant Death Syndrome



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What is SIDS?

Each week, 3 babies die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in Canada. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as Crib Death, refers to the sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant under one year of age. More specifically, babies between 2 and 4 months. Such deaths usually occur while the child is sleeping and remain unexplained even after a full investigation. Nobody knows how to prevent SIDS, but the latest research shows that there are things you can do to make your baby safer.

PREVENTION TIPS:

- Put your baby on his or her back to sleep.
- Make sure no one smokes around your baby.
- Avoid putting too many clothes or covers on your baby.
- Breastfeed your baby, it may give some protection against SIDS.

What causes SIDS?

We don't know for certain what causes SIDS. However, we do know that some babies are at higher risks than others. Sometimes the babies are at higher risks because of things we can't fix or control. For example, aboriginal babies have a higher rate of SIDS than non-aboriginal babies. We know that baby boys are at higher risk than baby girls. Premature or low birth weight babies are at a higher risk as well.

Although SIDS remains a mystery, there are some things that we do know:

- In the recent past, SIDS was often called "crib death." This is misleading because it suggests that the crib somehow causes the death or that these deaths occur only in the crib – both of which are untrue.
- SIDS is the most common cause of death in infants after the first week of life.
- SIDS deaths are not new – they have likely been occurring for thousands of years.
- The overall rate of SIDS is one out of every 750 babies born alive.
- In Alberta, there are about 50 cases each year.
- SIDS is most common in babies between two and four months.
- 90% of SIDS cases occur in infants under six months.
- It is unusual for SIDS to occur in babies under one month old or over eight months old.
- SIDS occur almost always during sleep.
- SIDS isn't hereditary.
- SIDS isn't contagious.
- SIDS isn't due to choking, neglect, abuse or accidental suffocation.

Head shape in babies

Health Canada has recommended that you put your baby to sleep on his or her back. But since this recommendation came out, there has been an increase in the number of babies who have developed a flat area on their head. This flattening of the head is called plagiocephaly (play-gee-oh-SEF-ah-lee). Plagiocephaly happens because the bones in a baby's skull are soft until about one year of age.

Parent's can help prevent plagiocephaly by:

- Allowing for some supervised 'tummy time' while your baby is awake.
- Changing the position of your baby's head while your baby is asleep on his/her back.
- If your baby tends to favor turning his/her head to one side, try to use toys, mobiles or yourself to encourage him/her to turn to the other side.
- If your baby continues to favor one side in spite of efforts to get them to turn his/her head in the other direction, have your baby checked by a doctor or public health nurse. In some cases, neck stretching exercises are needed.
- Changing the position of the crib regularly so that your baby will have to turn his or her head in different directions to see favorite objects such as a picture, toys, mobiles, windows or a doorway.
- If you are concerned about a flattened area on your baby's head, don't hesitate to discuss it with a doctor or other appropriate health care professional.