

SAFER SLEEP



Adapted from
SLEEP SOLUTIONS
FOR YOUR BABY,
TODDLER, AND
PRESCHOOLER
by Ann Douglas

Making Bed Sharing a Safer Option Some Unofficial Tips & Suggestions

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In the absence of any official safe bed-sharing recommendations, parents who bed share must exercise common sense and piece together sleep rules from various information sources.

That can take a lot of work and many mean that important safety information falls between the cracks as parents make all-important sleep decisions for themselves and their babies.

As James J. McKenna and Thomas McDade recently noted in the medical journal *Paediatric Respiratory Reviews*:

"While bed sharing can never be publicly recommended, due to its complexity, blanket recommendations against bed sharing and eliminating safety information for bed sharing families cannot be justified either."

If, after doing thorough research into the pros and cons of bed sharing and discussing this issue with your baby's health care provider, you decide to take your baby to bed with you for all or part of the night, consider these important safety points, which

will make the sleeping environment safer.

- **Research** the bed sharing issue before you start bringing your baby to bed.
- **Strive** to create the safest possible sleep environment for your baby.
- **Remember** that it is not safe for a baby to sleep on any soft sleeping surface. A baby may bury his face in the soft material and re-breathe exhaled air—something that can trigger a series of biological

catastrophes resulting in a SIDS-related death.

- **Remove** all pillows and blankets while your baby is sleeping with you.
- **Consider** the rolling risk. And be aware that guardrails designed for older children pose a significant threat to babies.
- **Be aware** of the risk of entrapment between the mattress and the bed frame, the bed and the wall, or the bed and another piece of furniture. Strangulation (with cords from window blinds) is another potential risk.
- **Ensure** that you're alert enough to tune into your baby's sounds and movements in the night. If you or your partner are overtired, intoxicated, taking sleeping pills, or under the influence of a prescription or over-the-counter medication that makes you less responsive to your baby (e.g., cough medicine or cold capsules), your baby could be at risk.
- **Realize** that three in a bed may be too many. Some SIDS studies have indicated that having a baby sleep between two large adult bodies may be dangerous, due to the risk of overlying.
- **Understand** that young siblings don't make safe bed mates for babies. Not only are their SIDS-specific risks. Most young children simply don't know what is and isn't safe for babies.



- **Provide** a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, your partner smokes, or you smoked during pregnancy, bed sharing is not a safe option. Babies exposed to tobacco smoke during pregnancy tend to be less responsive to the mother-baby interactions that occur during bed sharing, something that can increase a baby's risk of experiencing a SIDS-related death.

For an expanded version of this text and additional infant sleep recommendations, please read

Sleep Solutions for Your Baby, Toddler, and Preschooler: The Ultimate No-Worry Approach for Each Age and Stage by Ann Douglas.

About the Author

Ann Douglas is the author of numerous books about pregnancy and parenting, including *The Mother of All Pregnancy Books*, *The Mother of All Baby Books*, and *Sleep Solutions for Your Baby, Toddler, and Preschooler*.

You can read more of her articles about babies and sleep by visiting her online article archive at www.having-a-baby.com.

