

Sleeping with Your Baby: Know the Risks

Did you know that sleeping with your baby can be dangerous?

Parents choose to sleep with their babies believing it is good for them, often not knowing it can result in the injury or suffocation death of their child. In addition, there is no scientific proof that sleeping with your baby lowers the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also known as “crib death”.

Injury Facts

In Dane County (1994-2002):

- Almost ¾ (16 deaths) of unintentional suffocation deaths of children under age 2 occurred while sleeping with another person.
- In all cases, the child was trapped between a person and a mattress or a couch.

In the US (1999 to 2001):

- Most of the 100 suffocation deaths of children under age 2 involved adult beds.

The Risks

- Suffocation from adults or other children rolling onto baby.
- Suffocation caused by a baby rolling from back to tummy, because of the weight of an adult body on the bed.
- Suffocation from multiple babies (twins) sharing a crib has occurred.

Other Risks of Adult Beds

- Baby being trapped between bed and wall, another object, footboard, or couch cushions.
- Suffocation in waterbeds or soft bedding (pillows, sheepskin, blankets, quilts & comforters).
- Falls from bed onto mounds of clothing, plastic bags or other soft materials or objects that can suffocate your baby.

Safer Alternatives to Sleeping with Your Baby

- Every infant should sleep in a separate crib.
- Move the crib or bassinet next to your bed, or consider using a “co-sleeper” - an infant bed that attaches to an adult bed.
- Keep the baby in a crib and sleep on the floor or a cot in the baby’s room.

Either way the baby will still be within reach!

If you choose to sleep with your baby, lower the risks by:

- Always placing your baby on his or her back to sleep.
- NEVER sharing a bed with your child while extremely tired, taking medications that make you drowsy, or while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This can decrease awareness of your baby’s needs and reduce your ability to respond.

Baby Doll Examples



Trapped between Bed & Wall



Trapped between Bed & Object



Trapped in Footboard

Informational Resources:

US Consumer Product Safety Commission
www.cpsc.gov

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

Safe Kids Worldwide
www.safekids.org

Dept of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection
www.datcp.state.wi.us



Safe Nursery Action Group Members:

Nan Peterson
Safe Kids Coordinator
American Family Children’s Hospital
(608) 262-9993

Lisa Bullard-Cawthorne
Daniel Stattelmann-Scanlan
Amy Vieth
Public Health -
Madison & Dane County

Mary Bradley
Child Safety Advocate

John E Stanley
Dane County Coroner

Jim Savage
Kohl Safety Center

Michelle Reinen
WI DATCP
(608) 224-5160