



*So you want to know more about...*

# Safer Sleep

## Our Policy

*Effective 6/1/2006*

The only item allowed in a crib with the baby will be a pacifier—no blankets, wedges, or bumper pads. Infants may be swaddled for comfort, but blankets will be removed before placing the child in the crib.

Babies will be put to sleep on their backs. Parents must provide a note from the baby's physician instructing teachers to place the infant on his or her side or stomach, if necessary.

Parents will supply sleep sacks (without swaddling flaps) if they wish those to be used. Centers will have extra sleep sacks on hand. We will not use the type with swaddling flaps.

Once a child can roll back and forth easily on their own, they may be left on their stomach if they roll over during sleep.

Infants and toddlers may not sleep in infant seats, strollers, or swings. If they fall asleep while in any of these, they must be placed in their cribs or on their mats (for children 12 months or older).

All infant and toddler staff will be trained on Safe Sleep and Shaken Baby Syndrome annually. A staff member needs to physically enter the sleep room to check on sleeping infants every 5 minutes. A log will be kept outside the sleep room, where teachers can mark the time and their initials.

*This policy was established to meet or exceed the recommendations of NAEYC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and State of Michigan Child Care Licensing rules.*

## Safer Sleep for All Babies

When we first implemented our safer sleep policy, parents greeted the changes with similar remarks:

- Some babies *need* soft, cozy beds to sleep.
- Parents and children have been sleeping together for centuries.

While it's true that many babies enjoy snuggling in a soft, comfortable setting, they can certainly learn to sleep without being surrounded by suffocation hazards.

It is true that families have been sleeping together for centuries. However, recent research has

shown increased risk for unexplained Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and accidental suffocation both for co-sleepers and stomach sleepers. Based on this risk, the American Academy of Pediatrics, NAEYC, and state licensing agencies have changed their recommendations for sleep procedures.

The Back to Sleep initiative launched in 2003 was a tremendous first step in reducing infant crib deaths. Now agencies and physicians are working to ensure that the entire sleeping environment is free from suffocation hazards. We appreciate your support.

### further resources

- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- **American SIDS Institute:** [www.sids.org](http://www.sids.org)
- **Back to Sleep Campaign:** [www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org)
- **First Candle/SIDS Alliance:** [www.sidsalliance.org](http://www.sidsalliance.org)
- **Maternal and Child Health Bureau:** [www.mchb.gov](http://www.mchb.gov)

## Facts about Sleep-Related Infant Deaths

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is the unexplained, inexplicable death of a child under twelve months of age. It remains unexplained after autopsy, death scene reenactment, and review of medical history. SIDS is not caused by immunizations, vomiting, or choking.

These are some of the risk factors for SIDS:

- Babies sleeping on their stomachs (5 x greater risk)  
Babies who usually sleep on their backs being placed on their stomachs (18 x greater)
- Mothers who smoke during pregnancy (3 x greater)
- Babies who breathe secondhand smoke (2.5 x greater)

Low birth weight, premature delivery, multiple births, young mothers, and short intervals between births are all additional risk factors for SIDS.

Approximately half of sleep-related infant deaths between 1-12 months of age are related to unsafe sleeping conditions.

**Unsafe sleep environments** include soft surfaces, unapproved sleep equipment (strollers, car seats, etc.), wedging or entrapment, overheating, and sleeping with soft objects including blankets, stuffed animals, bumper pads, and pillows.

Advocates of co-sleeping need to understand why babies who co-sleep are at increased risk of sleep-related death.

- Adult bedding can lead to accidental suffocation
- Adult mattresses do not provide adequate support for developing infants.
- Adult beds do not have safety rails to prevent falls.
- Sleeping adults can accidentally roll onto or block the mouth and nose of a sleeping infant.

Parents who decide to sleep with their infants should not smoke or use any substances which impair arousal. Physicians recommend a separate infant-approved sleep surface next to the parents' bed as a safer alternative. This provides many of the co-sleeping benefits...

- Convenience for night-time feedings and diapering
- Less disturbance to other sleeping children
- The comfort of proximity to touch and voices

...without the risk of suffocation. If you're trying to transition away from co-sleeping, establish comfort and bonding rituals away from bedtime. Start out with your child's bassinet or crib in your room, and gradually move it farther away from your bed when you are both comfortable.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Why is this so important now? Are more babies dying in their cribs than in the past?** Not necessarily. Many crib deaths are being reclassified in light of new research. And studies have shown that many sleep deaths are preventable.

**What is a sleep sack?** A sleep sack is a zip-up garment that replaces loose blankets and bedding. It keeps baby warm and free from entanglement and suffocation risks. Some sleep sacks come with swaddling straps, but we do not allow these at the center. Sleepsacks certified safe by the SIDS Alliance can be purchased at Babies R Us and Meijer for 19.99

**The AAP says that a light blanket can be tucked over a child and under the mattress, why doesn't GH do that?** State of Michigan licensing regulations prohibit anything but a pacifier in the crib with sleeping infants.

**Can babies be swaddled when they aren't sleeping?** Yes! We will un-swaddle them to place them in a crib.

**Can my baby use her comfort item to at least fall asleep?** Yes. We just don't place them in the crib with infants.

**When can my older infant graduate from a sleep sack to a blanket?** Children do not have to use sleep sacks. They may use blankets when they begin to sleep on a mat. Licensing regulations state children should sleep in cribs until at least 12 months of age. We determine the transition to a mat on an individual basis.

**Is a Velcro® swaddler permissible with a doctor's note?** Yes, if the pediatrician verifies that it is medically necessary.