

Steps Parents Can Take To Prevent SIDS From Happening To Their Baby

(NAPSA)—Every year, 3,000 infants between the age of one month and a year die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), the leading cause of infant deaths in the United States. According to pathologist Michael Graham, MD, FCAP, while the cause of SIDS deaths is still a mystery, there are things parents can do to help protect their children.

“The good news in the fight against SIDS is that we have been able to identify several factors that put babies at risk,” said Dr. Graham. Those risk factors include:

- Putting babies to sleep on their stomachs.
- Putting babies to sleep on soft mattresses or with fluffy bedding.
- Smoking during pregnancy or exposing babies to second-hand smoke after birth.

What physicians do know about SIDS is that for unexplained reasons some babies stop breathing. Research suggests that some babies may have certain stages of brain development or brain abnormalities that may, under certain conditions, damage the areas of the brain that control breathing.

Reducing the risk of SIDS starts before a child is born. Pregnant women who smoke should stop. It is also important that mothers receive adequate prenatal care because babies who are born premature or with a low birth weight are at a higher risk for SIDS.

Dr. Graham, a physician who specializes in treating patients through laboratory medicine, says taking precautions to reduce the risk of SIDS continues once the baby is home.

“Stop smoking and request that others don’t smoke in your home, because one of the significant risk factors of SIDS is passive smoke,” said Dr. Graham. “The baby’s sleep environment is also an important factor in preventing

How To Reduce The Risk of SIDS:

- Receive appropriate prenatal care.
- Don’t smoke or expose your baby to smoke.
- Put your baby to sleep on its back.
- Use a firm mattress in your crib.
- Remove fluffy blankets and stuffed animals from the crib.

Source: College of American Pathologists



SIDS. Put your baby to sleep on his or her back in a safe crib with safe bedding. Since 1994, when educational programs about putting children to sleep on their backs started, SIDS deaths have decreased by nearly 40 percent.”

Researchers believe that babies do not sleep as deeply on their backs as children do on their stomachs, and that they are more easily aroused. When putting children to sleep, remove soft fluffy blankets and stuffed animals from babies’ cribs and make sure they sleep on a firm mattress and only use thin blanketing designed for babies.

There are other ways to reduce a baby’s risk of SIDS. Avoid overheating the baby and keep his or her room at 68 to 72 degrees. If the baby feels too warm, remove a layer of clothing. Also, studies indicate that breastfeeding decreases the risk of SIDS. Steer clear of “co-sleeping” where you and your infant sleep in the same bed.

Dr. Graham says it is important to listen to your physician and take the necessary precautions to keep your child safe.

“New parents are often given conflicting messages about how to raise their new babies. However, physicians know that putting a child to sleep on his or her back in a safe crib with safe bedding *decreases* the chance of SIDS and *increases* the likelihood of a happy, healthy baby,” said Dr. Graham.