

Prevention of Cot Death

Sadly, we do not know why some babies die suddenly and for no apparent reason from what is called cot death or sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). There are steps you can take to reduce the risk of cot death.

Back to sleep

Babies should be put down to sleep lying on their backs, unless there is a substantial medical reason not to do so. Sleeping on the back is preferable to sleeping on the side, and sleeping on the front should be avoided.

Feet to foot- Head uncovered

Babies should sleep in such a way that their head does not become covered during sleep. This is most easily achieved by putting a baby to sleep with his or her feet close to or touching the foot of the cot. Blankets are preferred to duvets, and should be tucked in so that the baby's head is exposed and uncovered without a hat.



Not too hot

Although it is important to prevent a baby becoming too cold, becoming too hot is also a danger. Room heating is not required at night except when the weather is very cold. Babies' bedrooms should be at a temperature overnight which is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult (usually 16-20 degrees).

Smoke free zone

Cigarette smoking in pregnancy and around babies increases the risk of cot death. Although giving up would be the best option, a baby will be partly protected if his or her sleeping place is regarded as a smoke free zone, whether the baby is actually asleep there or not.

Prompt medical advice

The risk of cot death may be reduced by seeking prompt medical advice for a baby who becomes unwell, particularly those with a raised temperature, breathing difficulties or who are less responsive than usual. A proportion may have acute infections amenable to treatment. Link to In an emergency.

Bed sharing for comfort - not sleep

While it is likely to be beneficial for parents to take their baby to bed with them to feed or comfort, it is preferable to place the baby back into a cot to sleep. This is especially important if parents smoke or have consumed alcohol.