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Prevent Needless Deaths

Facts on safe sleep for newborns and infants

Unsafe sleep is a leading cause of preventable in local infants. In the Tampa Bay area, 157 infants died from preventable sleep-related causes over the last six years (2013-2018). That's more than eight kindergarten classrooms of children who died needlessly.

The facts on infant deaths from unsafe sleep practices:

- More infants die in adult beds than anywhere else. Infants are 40 times more likely to die in an adult bed than in their own crib.
- Bed-sharing, often referred to as co-sleeping, means having babies sleep in the same bed as parents, siblings or caregivers. Co-sleeping can lead to death by suffocation if an adult unintentionally rolls on top of them.
- Pillow-top mattresses, comforters, fluffy pillows, and stuffed animals pose a danger to infants in adult beds as well as cribs. Infants lack the muscle control needed to move their necks if something is blocking their airway.
- Risks of infant sleep-related deaths increase when adults smoke or use prescription medications, alcohol or illegal drugs.

Safe sleep tips for parents and caregivers:

- *Bring the crib into the parent or caregiver's room.* Sharing a room with a child offers almost all of the same benefits of sharing a bed, but without the risks. It's recommended to bring the baby's crib, a smaller bassinet or a Pack n' Play into the parents' room for the first year of the baby's life.
- *Practice the ABCs of safe sleep.* The safest way for infants to sleep is **A**lone on their **B**acks in a **C**rib. This minimizes the risk of the infant suffocating, especially if they have not yet developed neck muscle control.
- *Follow crib setup recommendations.* If using a crib, the mattress should be firm and fit snugly inside the crib's frame. Crib sheets should fit tightly around the mattress. A baby's sleeping area should be kept free of blankets, pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals, sleep positioners and toys.
- *Learn from the past.* We know more today than we did yesterday. As more information becomes available, parents and caregivers must let go of some practices in order to provide children with the safest environment possible for sleeping. We changed our habits about car seats and lead paint; it is time to change our habits on co-sleeping.

Prevent Needless Deaths is an awareness campaign made possible by the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, Eckerd Kids and the Florida Department of Children and Families.