

Know the Dangers of Unsafe Infant Sleep

Dozens of Tampa Bay infants have died from sleep-related causes; learn and share ways to prevent this 100 percent preventable tragedy

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In the Tampa Bay area alone, nearly 140 infants died of preventable sleep-related causes over the last five years (2012-2016). Each of these deaths was preventable.

Co-sleeping, which means having babies sleep in the same bed as parents, siblings or caregivers, is often the cause of sleep-related infant death. In fact, more infants die in adult beds than anywhere else, and infants are 40 times more likely to die in an adult bed than in their own crib.

When co-sleeping, a baby may suffocate if an adult unintentionally rolls on top of them or if the baby is positioned against a pillow or under a blanket. Infants can't roll away or move their heads because they lack the muscle strength to move their head if something is blocking their airway. Pillow-top mattresses, comforters, fluffy pillows, blankets, sleep positioners and stuffed animals are a danger to infants in adult beds, as well as in cribs.

Take a few moments to learn the measures you can take today to prevent more sleep-related infants deaths from occurring in our community:

- *Bring the crib into the parent or caregiver's room.* Sharing a room with a child has almost all of the same benefits of sharing a bed, but without the risks. It's recommended to bring the baby's crib, or a smaller bassinet, 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 strength.


- *Follow crib setup recommendations.* A crib mattress should be firm and fit snugly inside the crib's frame, and sheets should fit tightly around the mattress. The sleeping area should be free of blankets, pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals, sleep positioners and toys for children under six months.

- *Prepare for when your child will not be sleeping at home.* If a child sleeps at someone else's home, such as with grandparents or other caretakers, make sure they have the proper sleeping arrangements by using a crib or pack-n-play with a fitted sheet. Infants should never be placed on a blow up mattress, recliner or couch, even if it is temporary.

- *Learn from the past.* 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's time to change our habits on co-sleeping.

Even one preventable child death is too many. Learn more about how you can help keep children in our community safe at www.preventneedlessdeaths.com.



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