



SUNDHEDSSTYRELSEN



# Prevent SIDS

—and the development of head deformities

Brochure for parents

ENGELSK

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## **Prevent SIDS—and the development of head deformities**

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# SIDS in Denmark

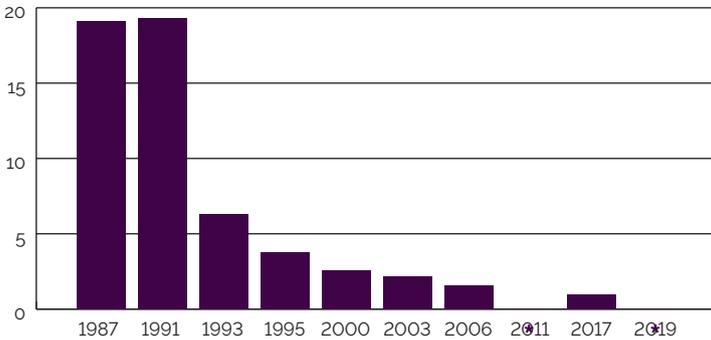
Fortunately, SIDS occurs very rarely in Denmark. Even so, every year, there are children who die suddenly in their sleep despite a lack of serious illness and with no apparent cause. This is known as "sudden infant death syndrome" (SIDS), also called "cot death".

Three factors have been shown to increase the risk of SIDS: a child sleeping on its stomach or side, being exposed to tobacco smoke, and being too warm while sleeping.

In light of this, since 1991, the Danish Health Authority and many other national health authorities have made the following recommendations:

1. Infants should always sleep on their backs
2. Mothers should avoid smoking while pregnant, and children should not be exposed to tobacco smoke after birth
3. Parents should ensure that children are not too warm while sleeping

**Number of sudden deaths during sleep in the first year of life per 10,000 newborns. Calculated from an average of 60,000 newborns per year.**



\* Fewer than 5 children per year

The number of children dying unexpectedly while sleeping has fallen from about 120 children per year to app. 5 or fewer children per year because of these recommendations.

# 3 simple tips

## 1. Always put an infant to sleep on its back

Putting an infant to sleep on its stomach or side significantly increases the risk of SIDS.

A child capable of turning over on its own while asleep can be allowed to remain asleep on its stomach.

If and only if you remain awake, your infant may sleep face-down on your chest.

A small number of infants with congenital diseases should sleep on their stomachs. Your paediatrician will let you know if this applies to your child.



## 2. Avoid smoking

Children exposed to tobacco smoke, whether in the womb or after birth, are at significantly greater risk of SIDS.

Avoid smoking while pregnant, and avoid smoking indoors after your child is born. This reduces the risk of SIDS.

## 3. Keep your child from becoming too warm while sleeping

A child that becomes too warm while sleeping is at greater risk of SIDS. Your child should not sweat while sleeping. The chest and the back of the neck are the best places to check to determine if your child is too warm.

Ensure your child sleeps in a cool environment (18–20°C). If you open a window to keep the temperature below 20°C, be sure your child is not exposed to a draught.

Do not tightly wrap your child with duvets or blankets during sleep. Whether your child is asleep or awake, always take off outerwear when going indoors. Your child will be too warm sleeping in a pram, carrycot, or similar space indoors while dressed in layers.

If your child is ill and has a fever, dress the child in light clothing only and put it to sleep beneath just a sheet. This way, the child can stay cool.



# A safe place to sleep

The safest place for an infant to sleep is in its own bed, in the same room as its parents. This recommendation applies especially to the first six months, but ideally to the whole first year of life.

The mattress should be relatively firm and extend all the way to the edge of the cot. The child should sleep under a light baby blanket of an appropriate size for the bed, and which the child can kick away on its own.

To allow the child to move its head more easily while sleeping, it should not have a pillow beneath its head. Also, remove loose blankets, toys, and other objects that the child could become wrapped in while asleep.

Place the child closest to the foot of the bed.



## Can I sleep with my infant?

If you choose to allow your infant to sleep in your bed, place it between one parent and the infant's own bed. Be certain the child cannot fall between the two beds.

The child should sleep under its own light baby blanket on one side of your bed. The child should have as much space as it would have sleeping in its own bed.



Pets and older siblings should not be allowed to sleep in the same bed as the infant and parents. Pets and small children often toss and turn in their sleep, so they can take up too much space in the bed. Infants of parents that smoke are at greater risk if they sleep together with their parents.

# Prevent the development of head deformities

Infants' heads may become deformed if they spend too much time on their backs or on the same side, including while awake. There are ways to prevent this:

- Let your child spend time on its stomach as much as possible while awake and not being held. This also strengthens the child's motor skill development.
- When changing your child's nappy, or whenever your child wakes up, roll the child onto its stomach and let it stay in that position for as long as possible.



- Be careful not to allow the child's head to always tilt towards the same side when sleeping on its back.



- Be sure to care for, play with, and talk to your child from both the left and right sides. Your child can also rest face-down on your arm occasionally.



- Carry your child using both your right and left arms, and have your child turn its head in both directions—keep this in mind when burping your child, too.
- If your child is bottle-fed, alternate having the child rest on your right and left arms during feeding.



Use car seats for transportation only. Small children should not sit upright for long periods of time.

If it seems like your child may be developing a deformity (e.g., a head that is flat on one side), seek advice from a healthcare professional.

# REMEMBER the three simple tips for preventing SIDS

- Always put your infant to sleep on its back
- Do not smoke during pregnancy—and do not expose your child to tobacco smoke after birth
- Keep your child from becoming too warm while sleeping

and also remember that the safest place for an infant to sleep is in its own bed, in the same room as its parents.

**Also, REMEMBER** these three simple tips to help your baby's head retain its shape:

- Get your child used to spending time on its stomach as often as possible while awake—beginning at birth
- Ensure your child's head alternates resting on the right and left sides during sleep
- Provide stimulation for your child from both sides while awake; this discourages the child from favouring one side or the other and developing a deformity.

If you have concerns about the shape of your child's head, talk to a healthcare professional.

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