

Media Information Statement

Theories about the causes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Recommendations about infant care and safety must be based on strong scientific evidence: not unproven theories

- Research into SIDS has been undertaken for decades, however, the causes of SIDS are not yet known. Hundreds of theories about the causes of SIDS have been proposed but many of these theories are not based on strong scientific evidence
- Infant care and suggestions about infant sleeping position and other safe sleeping matters that are not based on strong scientific evidence can increase the risk that a baby may die suddenly and unexpectedly
- There is strong scientific evidence to support the back sleeping position as the safest sleeping position for infants¹⁻³. Placing baby to sleep on the tummy increases the risk of SIDS nine times and placing baby on the side doubles the risk⁴
- The recommendations of the SIDS and Kids Safe Sleeping program are based on strong scientific evidence. The program was developed by Australian SIDS researchers, paediatricians, pathologists, and child health experts with input from overseas experts in the field. The 87% drop in SIDS deaths and the 5,000 lives that have been saved is testament to the effectiveness of the program⁵

To Reduce the Risks of Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infancy (SUDI) including SIDS and Fatal Infant Sleep Accidents:

1. Sleep baby on the back from birth, not on the tummy or side
2. Sleep baby with face uncovered (no doonas, pillows, lambs wool, bumpers or soft toys)
3. Avoid exposing babies to tobacco smoke before birth and after
4. Sleep baby in a safe cot, with a safe mattress and in a safe sleeping place
5. Sleep baby in their own safe sleeping environment next to the parent's bed for the first six to twelve months of life

For further information visit the SIDS and Kids website at www.sidsandkids.org or telephone on 613 9819 4595.

References

1. Jeffery HE, Megevand A, Page (1999) Why the prone position is a risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome. *Pediatrics* 104(2 Pt 1):263-9.
 2. National Institute of Clinical Studies. (2005) The risk of SIDS: Placing infants to sleep on their back to reduce the risk of SIDS. *NICS Evidence-Practice Gaps Report Volume 2*:10-13.
 3. Hunt CE, Hauck FR. (2006) Sudden infant death syndrome. *CMJA: Canadian Medical Association Journal* 174(13): 1861-1869.
 4. Fleming PJ, Blair PS, Bacon C, Bensley D, Smith I, Taylor E, Berry J, Golding J, Tripp J. (1996) Environment of infants during sleep and risk of the sudden infant death syndrome: results of 1993-5 case-control study for confidential inquiry into stillbirths and deaths in infancy. Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths Regional Coordinators and Researchers. *BMJ* 313(7051):191-5.
 5. Tursan d'Espaignet E, Bulsara M, Wolfenden L, Byard RW, Stanley FJ. (2008) Trends in sudden infant death syndrome in Australia from 1980 to 2002. *Forensic Science Medicine and Pathology* 4(2): 83-90
-