

June 2010

Shared sleeping surfaces linked to a high percentage of sudden and expected infant deaths

Studies show there is evidence that sharing a sleep surface with a baby increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and fatal sleep accidents in some circumstances.

Across Australia an average of 46% of infants who died suddenly and unexpectedly in Australia in 2007 died while co-sleeping. Babies who are most at risk of SIDS or sleeping accidents whilst sharing a sleep surface, are babies who are less than four months of age, and babies who are born pre-term or small for gestational age.

Most studies show that SIDS deaths attributable to sharing a sleep surface are predominantly amongst babies whose parents smoke. There is a very high risk of infant death and sleeping accidents when a baby shares a sofa or couch with an adult during sleep.

A large scale published study showed in 2007 that 8.5% of Australian parents bed-share with their babies. A recent unpublished study of new mothers, commissioned in conjunction with Tresillian Family Care Centres, which surveyed 1000 mums of children aged up to two years old, showed **41 per cent** allowed their baby to sleep in their bed with them". It is of concern if co-sleeping is on the increase within Australia.

Leanne Raven, CEO, **SIDS and Kids** Australia says, "*SIDS and Kids communicates safe sleeping messages in order to help reduce the number of sudden and unexpected deaths. However, the research shows that we need to be more diligent in our messaging in order to ensure that parents are aware of the risks and equipped to make educated decisions about safe sleeping habits.*"

This staggering statistic can be altered by using the **SIDS and Kids** safe sleeping recommendations:

- Sleep baby on the back from birth, not on the tummy or side
- Sleep baby with face uncovered
- Avoid exposing babies to tobacco smoke
- Provide a safe cot, safe mattress and safe bedding
- Sleep baby in their own safe sleeping environment next to the parent's bed for 6 – 12 months

Red Nose Day is **SIDS and Kids** major fundraising event and will be held on Friday 25 June 2010. Funds raised contribute to vital research and education in the areas of stillbirth, SIDS and safe sleeping.

Through 23 years of Red Nose Day fundraising, SIDS and Kids has been instrumental in achieving an 85 per cent reduction in cases of SIDS in Australia, however the cause(s) of SIDS is still unknown. Red Nose Day provides critical funding for a 24-hour bereavement support service, community education to reduce incidents of SIDS and fatal sleeping accidents, and research into areas such as SIDS and stillbirth.

Red Nose Day merchandise will be available throughout the month of June from Target, Big W, Best & Less, Sam's Warehouse, Go-Lo, Crazy Clarks, Priceline & Priceline Pharmacy, Quix Mobil, Dick Smith, Spotlight, Supercheap Auto, Blockbuster Videos and many other retail outlets throughout Australia.

Product can also be purchased and donations made online at www.rednoseday.com.au or by calling 1300 1 RED NOSE (1300 173 366).

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