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## Put your baby ‘back to sleep’ to prevent SIDS

STANTON~ Parents make hundreds of decisions that affect the health and well-being of their infants. But perhaps the most important decision of all is where and how their baby is placed to sleep.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is responsible for more infant deaths in the United States than any other cause of death during infancy. Each year in Michigan, around 63 babies die before their first birthday due to accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed. Growing evidence points to the fact that unsafe sleep practice is a leading risk factor for SIDS and accidental infant deaths- something that can be avoided.

While babies do need adult supervised “tummy time,” during waking hours, putting your baby to sleep on his or her back is one of the most important things you can do to reduce the risk of SIDS. “Back sleeping is comfortable for babies, but also much safer than tummy sleeping as well” said Andrea Tabor, Community Health and Education Division Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD). “Babies can be taught to sleep on their backs at a very early age and will get used to the sleeping position. One of the most common reasons parents give for not putting their babies to sleep on their backs is the fear that the baby will choke if he or she spits up, but parents should be reassured in knowing that babies have mechanisms that keep them from choking when lying on their back,” Tabor continued.

It is also recommended that the safest place for a baby to sleep, for at least the first six months, is near the parent’s bed, in his or her own sleep space. This also makes breastfeeding easier.

To reduce the risk of SIDS, make sure all those who care for your baby follow these guidelines:

- **Make sure babies sleep by themselves in a crib, portable crib or bassinet.** Bed sharing is not recommended because it can lead to suffocation.
- **Always place babies on their backs to sleep.** Research shows that back-sleeping is the safest sleep position for babies.
- **Babies should sleep on a firm mattress with a tightly fitted sheet.** Never place your baby to sleep on pillows, quilts, couches, bean bags or other soft surfaces.
- **Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib.** Keep pillows, quilts, blankets, comforters, wedges, bumper pads, and stuffed toys out of your baby’s sleep area.
- **Use a wearable blanket or other type of sleeper, instead of blankets, to keep your baby warm.**
- **Make sure the baby’s head and face are uncovered.** Blankets and other items should not be placed over the baby’s face while they are in a crib, cradle, bassinet, car seat, stroller or infant carrier.
- **Don’t dress the baby too warmly.** Dress your baby in as much or as little clothing as you are wearing.
- **Don’t allow smoking around your baby.** Exposure to secondhand smoke significantly increases an infant’s risk for SIDS and other health issues such as asthma, lower respiratory track infections and middle-ear infections.

For more information contact MMDHD at 989-831-5237 or visit the Back to Sleep campaign website at [www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS).

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