

*ISPID Epidemiology & Education Working Group
Guidelines on Risk Reduction*

**Safe Infant Sleep Recommendations
Evidence-based**

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A. Perceived consensus guidelines between countries:

1. Always place infants to sleep on their back (day and night).¹⁻⁴
2. Keep the infant's head and face uncovered.⁵
3. Avoid sleeping with an infant on a sofa or chair.⁶
4. Avoid placing an infant to sleep in car seats or rockers.^{7,8}
5. Use a firm, flat mattress in the crib or bed.⁹
6. Avoid placing the infant in an inclined or propped position either for sleep or whenever the infant is unobserved for any period of time.¹⁰⁻¹⁵
7. Avoid loose blankets, soft bedding and placing items in the bed (e.g., no pillows, toys or bumpers. If blankets are used, these should be firmly tucked in).^{16,17}
8. Always sleep the infant in the same room as the carer for at least the first 6 months.^{4,6}
9. Keep the infant's environment tobacco-smoke free, before and after birth.^{18,19}
10. Encourage and support breastfeeding.^{20,21}
11. Avoid overheating (place infant on back, head and face uncovered, and dress the infant for the room temperature).^{22,23}

B. Other guidelines about which opinions vary between countries regarding whether and how they should be adopted:

1. An adult sharing sleep with an infant on the same surface: in some countries there is a recommendation against this practice (risk elimination)²⁴, while in others a risk minimisation approach is recommended advising against hazardous bed-sharing (when parents drink alcohol, take drugs, smoke or share a sofa with an infant and when infants are born premature (<37 weeks) or with low birthweight (<2.5Kg)).²⁵⁻²⁹
2. In some countries Infant sleeping bags are recommended, in other countries it is recommended that the blanket should be tucked well under the mattress at armpit height.^{30,31}
3. Some countries recommend placing the infant to sleep in the lower third of the cot-type bed to reduce risk of head covering (feet to foot position).³²
4. In some countries offering a pacifier (dummy) is recommended when placing the infant to sleep and other countries make no recommendation (parental choice). For breastfeeding infants the recommendations are generally to offer a pacifier after breastfeeding has been established (usually 4-8 weeks after birth) and to stop after 6-12 months. Neck cords should not be used.³³⁻³⁵
5. Some parents believe swaddling (wrapping) helps young infants sleep. If swaddling, use thin materials such as muslin or cotton. Ensure infant's head remains uncovered; do not swaddle above the shoulder. Never put a swaddled infant to sleep on their front or side. Wrap an infant firmly but not tightly, allowing plenty of chest wall

expansion, and hip movement.³⁶ Check the infant's temperature to ensure they do not get too hot. Avoid swaddling if an infant is sharing a sleep surface when sleeping or feeding (where falling asleep is possible). Stop swaddling as soon as your infant starts to show signs of attempting to roll.^{37,38}

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