

SINAI HEALTH LINK

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HEALTH LINK

1-888-AT-SINAI (1-888-287-4624)

What parents should know about SIDS

My baby was fine when I put her to bed,” a mother sobs. “When I went to check her, she was dead.”

That story is told thousands of times each year, by parents of babies who die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS. It’s the biggest killer of babies between 1 month and 1 year old.

But there’s a new story being told, too.

In the last few years, far fewer babies are dying from SIDS – less than half as many as in the early 1990s.

Scientists aren’t sure what causes SIDS, but they are finding things that seem to prevent it.

SIDS strikes suddenly while a baby is sleeping. Most victims are 2 to 4 months old. Boys die from SIDS more often than girls. African American babies are at higher risk. More babies die in the fall and winter.

Because the babies seem healthy, parents often wonder what they did wrong. Usually, the answer is “nothing.”

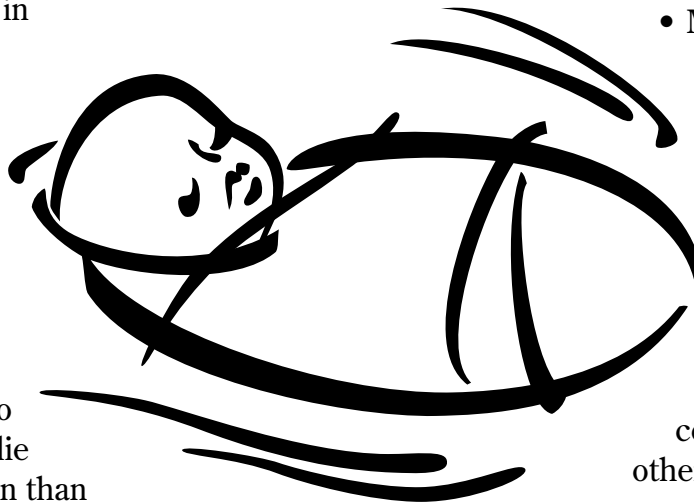
“You have no warning with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome,” says Gary Kaufman, MD, a children’s doctor at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago. “There are no advance signs something is wrong. But there are things parents can do.”

The most important rule: Healthy babies should sleep on their backs.

“We’re not sure why this helps,” says Dr. Kaufman, “but it does.”

Other things parents can do:

- Make your baby’s space a no-smoking zone. Children exposed to smoke get sick more often, and have more risk of SIDS.
- Put your baby to sleep on a firm mattress. Don’t use fluffy blankets, comforters, waterbeds or other soft surfaces.
- Don’t leave pillows or stuffed toys in the baby’s bed.
- If you use a blanket, only pull it up to the child’s chest. Don’t cover the baby’s head.



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**THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE:
HEALTHY BABIES SHOULD SLEEP ON THEIR BACKS**

What parents should know about SIDS

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- Keep baby's area at room temperature, or a little cooler. Don't wrap your baby in heavy clothes at bedtime.
- Call the doctor any time your baby seems sick.



- Get all the baby's shots on time.
"Follow these steps to protect your baby," Dr. Kaufman says. "But don't worry too much. The news about SIDS gets better every year."

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SIDS,
CALL 1-888-AT-SINAI TO TALK TO A SINAI DOCTOR**

Tips for moms-to-be

You can cut the chance of SIDS even before your baby is born.

- See a doctor right away when you get pregnant. SIDS happens more often if mom doesn't get good care before her baby is born.
- Eat healthy while you're pregnant so your baby will grow. Tiny babies are more at risk.
- Don't smoke, drink or take drugs.
- Wait until you're 20 to have your first baby.
- Take time off between babies. There's more danger when moms have babies close together.
- Consider breastfeeding. It may help.

ASK YOUR SINAI DOCTOR

- Q.** *If my baby sleeps on his back to prevent SIDS, won't he choke when he spits up?*
- A.** The risk of choking is the same on the back or tummy. Since back sleeping seems to cut the chance of SIDS, that's best most of the time. But babies who have certain medical problems may need to sleep on their stomachs. So ask your doctor which way is best.

URBAN LEGENDS

Most ideas about what causes SIDS are wrong. It's NOT caused by:

- Vomiting and choking
- Colds or infections
- DPT shots or other vaccines

And babies don't catch it from someone else. SIDS is not contagious.

National SIDS Resource Center