



# Safe Infant Sleep Practices in Child Care

Prepared by the Health Consultant Team at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

**Place all infants (birth through 12 months) completely flat on their backs on a firm, tight-fitting mattress for sleep in a crib or playpen.**

- There is no safe way to elevate the head of the crib or playpen
- ALWAYS place an infant flat on her back for sleep in a crib or playpen, unless it is ordered by a health care provider to do otherwise. It is required to obtain a written order from the health care provider specifying the medical reason and specific time frame to follow order, along with written parental permission, to keep in the infant's file and post by infant's crib/playpen. See Safe Infant Sleep Permission Forms. Review both documents with parents periodically. It is also recommended to consult an attorney to discuss the liability risk for you or the child care program. Regardless if you obtain written orders from the health care provider and the parents, you are not required to enroll the infant and follow the alternative sleep position/ sleeping surface if you feel uncomfortable.
- ALWAYS place an infant on her back each time you lay her down for sleep. Once an infant can roll from back to front and front to back, the infant can be allowed to remain in the sleep position that she chooses. You do not need to return her to a back sleeping position.
- Waterbeds, couches, soft mattresses, pillows, beanbags, Boppys™, and other soft surfaces should not be used as infant sleeping surfaces.

**Only allow infants to sleep in a crib or playpen approved by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. Check [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) for recalls.**

**\*\*As of June 28, 2011, all cribs manufactured and sold must comply with new and improved federal safety standards. By December 28, 2012, child care programs must only use compliant cribs that meet new federal standards. Check [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) for details.**

- Bassinets are not allowed.

**\*\*As of February 28, 2013, all playpens manufactured and sold must comply with new and improved federal safety guidelines.**

- If using a playpen:
  - Make sure the model has not been recalled. Visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) for updates.
  - Make sure there are no holes in the mesh
  - Frame is sturdy and locks in place
  - Use only the mattress/pad provided by the manufacturer
  - Mattress/pad should lay flat and touch all four corners of frame
  - Use the velcro straps/squares provided by the manufacturer to secure the mattress/pad in place
  - Bassinet inserts, mobiles, and changing pads sold with the playpen are not allowed.

**Do not allow infants to sleep in car seats, swings, Rock n Play sleeper or bouncy chairs. Require parents to remove their infant from the car seat when they arrive to child care. See [Safe Infant Sleep Positioning](#)**

- When infants sleep in car seats, bouncy chairs, swings, etc., the downward bending of the neck and head compress the airway, thus decreasing the amount of air the infant is able to breathe in.
- Infants sleeping in car seats, swings, or bouncy chairs, also raise a safety concern because the infants are not well protected from the other children's activity in these devices.
- Sleeping in positional devices contribute to positional skull deformities in infants.

**Do not attach anything to the crib/playpen**

- Do not attach mobiles, mirrors or crib toys to the crib or playpen
- Do not hang blankets or other items on the sides of the crib or playpen.
- Breathable/mesh bumper pads are not allowed.

**Place crib/playpen in a safe location.**

- Away from stairs, windows blinds, outlets, heaters, etc.
- Keep everything out of reach (ex. monitor cords, pictures, etc.).
- Do not hang anything heavy on the wall around the crib or playpen.

**Encourage tummy time when infant is awake and supervised.**

- This strengthens neck and shoulder muscles, encourages rolling over and crawling.

**Remove pillows, heavy blankets, fluffy comforters, sheepskins, bumper pads, stuffed toys, and other soft items from the crib.**

**Only use properly fitting FITTED crib or playpen sheets to cover the mattress or pad.**

- Do not use flat sheets, blankets, or fitted sheets that are the wrong size.
- Mattress/pad must maintain shape when fitted sheet is used. If playpen pad cannot maintain shape, use it without a sheet.

**Blankets are not recommended**

- Ask parents to consider using a sleep sack instead of a blanket. If a swaddle sleep sack (with arm panels) is used, it is recommended to discontinue use once the infant shows signs of rolling over or reaches 2 months of age.
- If using a blanket, only one blanket is allowed and it must be thin. Place the infant's feet to the foot of the crib/playpen and tuck the blanket in along the sides and foot of the mattress. The blanket should not come up higher than the infant's chest. Arms should be above the blanket.

**Swaddling is not recommended**

- Ask parents to consider using a sleep sack instead of a blanket. If a swaddle sleep sack (with arm panels) is used, it is recommended to discontinue use once the infant shows signs of rolling over or reaches 2 months of age.
- If parents request that their infant be swaddled, only one thin blanket should be used and it should not come any higher than to the infant's shoulders; blanket needs to be loose enough for a hand to fit between the blanket and the infant's chest so the infant doesn't have trouble breathing; blanket should be kept loose around the infant's hips. The AAP recommends swaddling to be discontinued when an infant shows signs of rolling over or reaches 2 months of age. Licensing requires swaddling to be discontinued once an infant becomes mobile.

**Make sure the infant's head remains uncovered during sleep.**

**Don't let the infant overheat during sleep.**

- Infants should not be dressed in more than one extra layer than an adult.
- Signs of overheating: sweating, chest feels hot to touch, flushed cheeks, heat rash, breathing rapidly

**Consider offering a pacifier (with parent's permission) when placing an infant down for sleep.**

- Once infant falls asleep and it falls out, it does not have to be reinserted. Always inspect pacifier for tears.
- Pacifiers should not be tied around an infant's neck or clipped to an infant's clothing.
- No stuffed animals/toys can be attached to the pacifier.

**Remove bibs, necklaces, hooded sweatshirts, and hats before laying infant down for sleeping.**

**Do not let babies sleep or play in a room where smoking is allowed at any time.**

**Keep infants in sight and sound when sleeping. If this is not possible use an infant monitor and conduct frequent visual checks every 10-15 minutes.**

- Lighting in the room must allow you to see the infant's face, to view the color of the infant's skin, to check on the infant's breathing and the placement of the blanket/pacifier (if used), and re-adjust clothing if needed.

**Do not allow infants to share a crib, even if they are siblings or twins.**

- Co-sleeping (infant sleeping in a bed with an adult/child) is also not recommended.

**Know and practice CPR.**

- Know what to do for an unresponsive infant.

**Do not use positioning devices.**

- As of September 2010, the CPSC and FDA warn against the use of positioning devices.
- Written permission from the infant's health care provider is required to use them.

**Encourage regular check-ups and immunizations. Support breastfeeding.**

**Set a policy on infant sleep position.**

- Put your policy in writing and give a copy to parents.
- Make sure parents sign your contract upon enrollment.
- Inform all staff, including substitutes and volunteers, of your policy on the first day of employment/volunteering before they are allowed to care for infants.
- Licensing requires written parental permission to use one blanket or sleepsack, a pacifier, and a security item for sleep. Post copy out of reach near the infant's crib/playpen for providers/staff to reference.

*Sources:*

*CFOC, 3rd Edition, 2011*

*CPSC Policy Statement – SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations*

*for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment", AAP, Pediatrics 2011.*

*Technical Report - SIDS and Other Sleep Related Infant Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment" AAP, Pediatrics 2011*

*AAP news, June 2013*

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