

0-2 years

# Safe sleeping



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# why you should read this brochure?

Children between the ages of 0 and 2 years sometimes die unexpectedly in their sleep. These children did not have any known health issues. This type of death is called cot death or SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Much research has been conducted into the causes of cot death. The results show that the risk of cot death is reduced if the child:

- sleeps on his back
- is not too warm
- sleeps in a snug sleeping bag or under a blanket
- does not come into contact with smoke

This brochure contains advice on safe sleeping habits. This advice is important and should not be underestimated! Thanks to these recommendations, the number of babies who die unexpectedly in their sleep has declined considerably. Around the year 1985, 190 babies died of cot death each year. Nowadays, there are fewer than 20 annual cases of cot death.

This brochure tells you what to pay attention to:

- sleeping position
- bed
- temperature in the nursery
- care

Curious whether you've done everything recommended to keep the risk of cot death to a minimum? Complete the checklist on the back of this brochure.

## → sleeping position

Put your baby on his back to sleep from birth. This keeps his face from getting obstructed and lets him breathe freely. This is the safest position.

### Why is it so dangerous for my baby to sleep on his tummy?

Your child's mouth and nose could get buried in the mattress, making it difficult for him to breathe.

### Can my baby never lie on his tummy?

When he's awake, lying on his tummy is good for his development. Your child will then learn to turn his head from side to side, move better and, later on, roll over. Never leave your child alone when lying on his stomach! Once your child is able to roll from his stomach to his back and from his back to his stomach, he can also sleep on his stomach.

### Will my child develop a lopsided or flat head if he sleeps on his back?

No, not if you have your child look at a different side each time. Put your child in his cot facing left one time and right the next. This way, his head will not become lopsided.

## → the bed

### Put your child in a bassinet or cot

It is safest for your child to sleep in a bassinet or cot. For the first six months, place the bassinet or cot as close to your own bed as possible. At any rate, do not have your baby sleep with you in your bed for the first four months. This is dangerous. Your child can become too warm due to your own body heat or the comforter. Your child can get stuck between the mattresses or under your comforter. Your child can fall

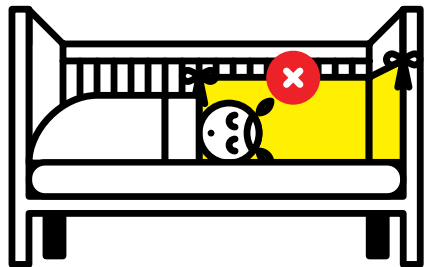


out of bed. Or you may accidentally roll over onto your child in your sleep. So, for the first four months, always put your baby in his own bassinet or cot to sleep.

### **Make sure the bed is safe**

The bed should allow air to pass through. Most cots have bars for this purpose. The distance between the bars should be 4.5 to 6.5 cm. If this distance is greater, your child can get his head or bottom trapped between them. Choose a firm mattress. There should be no lumps, dips or bumps in it. Make sure the mattress fits snugly into the cot, so that there are no large gaps.

Do not use pillows, support pillows, wedges or bumpers. Do not place any stuffed animals made of soft fabric or plastic in



your baby's bed. It is preferable not to use a plastic sheet. If you want to use a plastic sheet, do not place it under your baby's head. All of these things can make it difficult for your child to breathe.

### **Place the bed in a safe location**

Make sure that not only the bed is safe, but also the surroundings. Do not place the

bed near curtain cords. Is there a mobile hanging in the nursery? Hang it as high as possible so that your child cannot reach it. A mobile is for looking at, not playing with.

### Use a baby sleeping bag

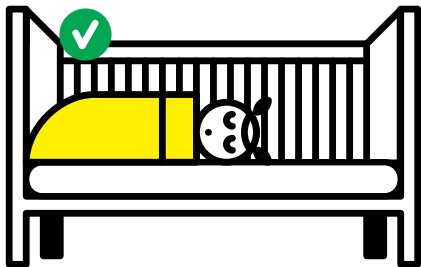
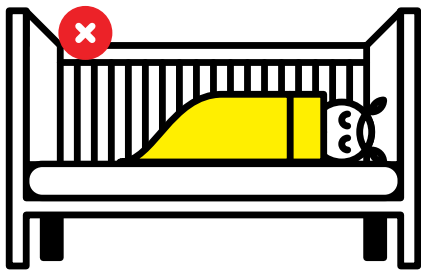
Use a snug-fitting baby sleeping bag for the first 2 years. This is the safest way to keep your child warm. Your child's head cannot get under it, so that your child can breathe freely and will not get too warm. Neither will your child get too cold, since he is always covered.

What should you pay attention to when buying a baby sleeping bag? Make sure it fits snugly. The sleeping bag should not be too big or too small, since this can be dangerous. A sleeping bag is too big if the armholes and neck opening are too large. Your child can then slide down into it. A sleeping bag is too small if your child cannot stretch out his legs completely in it or if the armholes and neck opening are too tight. A thin sleeping bag can be used together with a blanket or sheet. This will make it more difficult for your baby to roll onto his tummy.

### Do not use a comforter

Do not use a comforter for the first 2 years. A comforter can be much too warm for your child. And your child can easily get his head under it. This is dangerous because it can obstruct breathing.

A baby sleeping bag is the safest solution. Don't have one? Use a sheet and blanket. You can also use a blanket in a duvet cover. But make sure that the blanket fits snugly in the cover without being folded. The duvet cover must be long enough that at least 10 cm can be tucked under the mattress. Make sure the cover can be closed, so that your child cannot get inside it.



Using a blanket with a sheet or in a duvet cover? Make up the bed as short as possible, so that your child's feet are close to the end of the bed. This will prevent him from getting under the blanket. Tuck the sheet or blanket securely under the sides and bottom of the mattress.

### Never strap your child into bed

Some parents are afraid that their child will roll onto its stomach or climb out of bed, so they strap their child into the bed using a belt or harness. This is dangerous. Your child can roll over and get stuck, making it difficult or impossible to breathe. So never strap your child into bed. And don't use support pillows. Are you afraid that your child will roll onto his tummy? Use a baby sleeping bag.

Is your child a little older and are you afraid that he'll climb out of bed and fall down? Remove the bars from the bed, so that he can climb out of bed on his own without falling. You can also buy a large bed without bars.

## → temperature in the nursery

### **Make sure your child is not too warm**

Do not dress your child too warmly or not warmly enough. A hat is no longer needed after the first week. You can tell whether a child is too warm or too cold by feeling his neck and/or feet. They should feel warm to the touch. The ideal temperature for a nursery is between 16°C and 18°C. Does your child have a fever? Dress your child less warmly than usual.

### **Make sure your child is not exposed to cigarette smoke**

Smoke from a cigarette, cigar, pipe or incense is very harmful to children. A smoky environment is not only bad for your child when he is young, but can have adverse health effects for the rest of his life. Do not smoke near your child and avoid places where smoking is permitted.

### **Good ventilation**

Fresh air is important. Open a window in the nursery often.

## → care

### **Do not give your child medication that will make him sleepy**

Always be careful with medication. Never give your child medication that causes him to sleep or become drowsy. This includes cough syrup. Not sure if you can give your child a specific medicine? Call a doctor.

### **Rest and regularity**

Children need rest and regularity. Make sure your child has approximately the same eating and sleeping schedule every day. Avoid over-stimulation and stress. Over-stimulation and stress interfere with your child's sleep. Restful sleep is very important for a child.

### **Breastfeed and use a dummy**

If possible, it is advisable to breastfeed your child. Breastfeeding lowers the risk of cot death. You can also give your child a dummy when falling asleep. If you do this all the time, the risk of cot death will be smaller. Is your child breastfed? Make sure he is breastfeeding properly before giving him a dummy. Bottle feeding your child? You can start using a dummy right away.



# checklist → is your child safe in bed?

- I always put my child to sleep on his back.
- My child sleeps in a sleeping bag or under a sheet and blanket.
- My child always sleeps in his own cot or bed.
- My child lies as close to the end of the bed as possible.
- There is no pillow or bumper in the bed.
- The distance between the bars is between 4.5 and 6.5 cm.
- My child lies on a firm mattress in his bed.
- The mattress fits snugly in the bed.
- I never strap my child into bed.
- I often check whether my child is too warm or too cold.
- The temperature in the nursery is between 16°C and 18°C.
- My child is not exposed to smoke.
- I air out the nursery regularly.
- I never give my child medication that causes him to sleep or become drowsy.

## Were you able to check off everything on the list?

Then your child sleeps safely. Did you have to skip one or more items?

Take care of those aspects right away. Read through our recommendations again so you know exactly what to do to ensure that your child sleeps safely.

## want more information?

Want to learn more about how your child can sleep safely? Have a look at [www.veiligheid.nl](http://www.veiligheid.nl). You can also download the Veilig Groot Worden (growing up safely) app for a quick check as to whether your home is safe for your child.



This brochure is part of the 'Growing Up Safely' series. The other 3 brochures in this series that you will receive from the health centre (consultatiebureau) are:

- Safe Start (0–6 months)
- Safe Exploring (6–12 months)
- Safety on the Go (1–4 years)

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