

# Safer sleep

in mum and baby units

the  
lullaby  
trust

Action for  
Children



As a parent - on a **mum and baby unit**, you have full responsibility for the care of your baby.

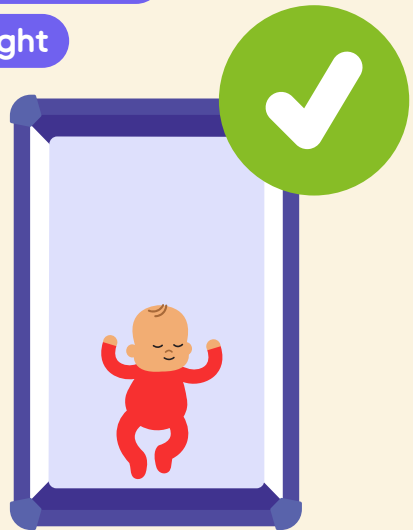
The information in this leaflet comes from research that has shown ways to reduce the risk of babies dying suddenly with no explanation, known as SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

Place your baby on their **back** for every sleep

In a **clear, flat, firm, separate sleep space**

Keep them **smoke free** day and night

- Once they start to roll from their back to their front and back again by themselves, you can let them find their own position for sleep.
- Supervised tummy time while awake can help to strengthen the muscles they need for rolling.



**Reason:** Many more babies have died of SIDS when placed to sleep on their front or side, rather than on their back.

## Your baby's sleep space

Your baby needs a clear, flat, separate sleep space in the same room as you, or another sober adult, day and night for the first six months. On the unit, you will be given a cot or crib for your baby to sleep in.

Check that your baby's sleep space has:

- A firm, flat mattress that fits the cot well with a waterproof cover and no raised or cushioned areas.
- No pillows, duvets, toys, cot bumpers or weighted bedding.
- No pods, nests or sleep



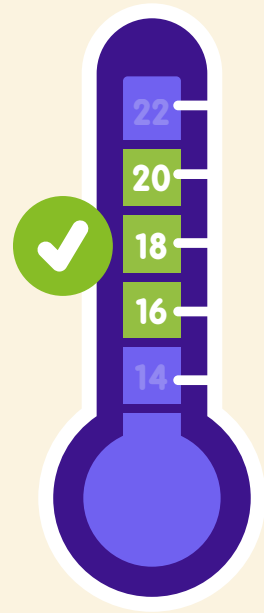
It is fine to sleep a new baby in a full-sized cot.

Babies should not be left to sleep in a seated position such as in a baby bouncer.

If your baby leaves the unit, they should not be left sleeping in a car seat when they are not travelling.

Make sure:

- Your baby's head is kept uncovered so they don't get too hot - hats and hoods aren't needed.
- Your room is kept between 16 and 20 degrees - a room thermometer can help with this.
- You place baby at the bottom of the cot or crib so that they cannot wriggle under covers – this is called 'feet to foot'. Firmly tuck in sheets and blankets no higher than shoulder height.



Check your baby's chest or the back of their neck to make sure they are not too hot or too cold. You should use cellular blankets or a baby sleeping bag - if you are using a sleeping bag, no extra bedding is needed.

**Reason:** Babies have a lower risk of SIDS when they sleep in their own cot or crib in the same room as their parent or carer. Soft or raised surfaces, pillows or quilts can increase the risk of SIDS by making it difficult for babies to breathe or cool down so it is important to keep their cot or crib clear.

## Bedsharing

You should not bedshare on the mum and baby unit with your baby.

It is especially important not to bedshare outside of the unit if:

- You or anyone in the bed smoke or the baby was exposed to smoking during pregnancy.
- Your baby was born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or weighed under 2.5kg or 5.5 pounds when they were born.
- You or anyone in the bed has drunk any alcohol or taken any drugs or medication that make you feel sleepy.



It can sometimes be difficult to settle your baby, particularly on a mum and baby unit, and you may feel tempted to bring your baby into bed with you. However, it is very important that your baby sleeps in their own clear, flat, separate sleep space.

**Reason:** Adult beds have not been designed or safety tested for infant sleep in the same way as a cot, crib or Moses basket. Research has shown that the safest place for a baby to sleep is in a separate sleep space. Having your baby sleep in a separate cot or crib in the same room as you will reduce their risk of SIDS.

## Smoking

It is best to keep your baby smoke free before and after birth.



Smoking in pregnancy greatly increases the risk of SIDS – take up offers of help to stop smoking and avoid being around other people's smoke.

**Reason:** Babies who are exposed to tobacco smoke before or after birth have a much greater risk of SIDS than babies who are kept smoke-free.

## Breastfeeding

Breastfeed your baby if you can. Breastmilk provides all the nutrition your baby needs for the first six months and protects them against infections and diseases. Breastfeeding also lowers the risk of SIDS.



**Reason:** SIDS risk is halved in babies who are breastfed for at least two months, but even any breastfeeding reduces the risk of SIDS.

## Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair

You may have been given a chair to use when feeding your baby. It is important that you do not fall asleep in a chair with your baby. The risk of SIDS is 50 times higher for your baby if you both fall asleep on a sofa or armchair.





This resource is produced by  
The Lullaby Trust, with support from  
Action for Children:  
[actionforchildren.org.uk](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

## Leaving prison

It is important to share this information on safer baby sleep with anyone caring for your baby. This includes anyone outside the mum and baby unit who helps to look after your baby whilst you are in prison.



When you leave prison, make sure that you have a cot, crib, Moses basket or travel cot available for your baby to sleep in. More information is available on our website, including information on emergency resources and baby banks that can support with equipment that you might need.



**For every baby.  
For every family.  
Forever.**

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