

## Monitors - the research

A range of baby monitors and technological interventions are now available for parents and caregivers to use in the home, including devices that monitor an infant's pulse rate, oxygen saturation, and movement during sleep. Digital technologies of this kind have been developed with the intention of supporting parents in several domains, including with infant sleep and safety<sup>1</sup>.

Such devices are often marketed as providing reassurance, with claims that they can reduce the frequency of "stressed or anxious" parental touches<sup>2</sup>. While these promises may be appealing to caregivers, there is currently no available evidence that they have a positive impact on parental mental health. Furthermore, despite their growing availability, baby monitors have not been shown to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)<sup>3</sup>.



## References

1. Ball, H. L. & Keegan, A.-A. Digital health tools to support parents with parent-infant sleep and mental well-being. *Npj Digit. Med.* **5**, 185 (2022).
2. Jewitt, C., Leder Mackley, K. & Price, S. Digitally-mediated parent–baby touch and the formation of subjectivities. *Vis. Commun.* **20**, 577–599 (2021).
3. Strehle, E.-M. *et al.* Can home monitoring reduce mortality in infants at increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome? A systematic review. *Acta Paediatr. Oslo Nor.* **1992** **101**, 8–13 (2012).

## Frequently asked questions

### What does the research show?

There are many baby monitors that track a baby's breathing, heart rate, and movement during sleep. These devices are designed to reassure parents and reduce worry, but there is currently no evidence that they improve parents' mental health. Research also shows that baby monitors do not prevent SIDS.

### Can I use a movement monitor in a vehicle or a buggy/pram?

If you place a baby somewhere where there is other movement, the monitor can pick up movement that hasn't come from the baby. This could give you false reassurance. Be aware of this if you are using the monitor anywhere where there is movement, such as a car or pram, or anywhere where the monitor could pick up vibrations, such as if you're walking around the cot on certain flooring.

### Which baby monitor is best?

Though parents and carers may find baby monitor's reassuring, there's no evidence that they help prevent SIDS. This means the best monitor is the one that meets your needs the most. With our work, including our Care of Next Infant (CONI) programme, we tend to recommend simple movement monitors, such as mattress monitors, skin contact and skin contact clip-on monitors. Remember, a baby monitor can give you peace of mind but can never replace a parent or carers' supervision.

### **Do baby monitors need WiFi?**

Movement monitors do not rely on WiFi connection. Some other monitors do, but we don't use these in our CONI programme.

### **What is the key takeaway for families?**

There are many baby monitors available on the market. However, there is no evidence that they prevent SIDS. The safest place for an infant to sleep is in the same room as their parent or caregiver for the first 6 months of life.

