

Room sharing - The Research

Room sharing refers to an infant sleeping in the same room as their parent or caregiver, but in a separate cot or Moses basket. This arrangement allows the parent or caregiver to remain close to the infant, making it easier to provide feeding, comfort, and monitoring throughout the day and night. As the risk of sleep-related deaths is highest during the first six months of life, room sharing is recommended during this period.



Several key studies have investigated the relationship between room sharing and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Four major papers specifically examined this factor in cases of infants who died from SIDS. These studies consistently found that infants who slept alone in a separate room during their early months faced a higher risk of SIDS. After accounting for other risk factors, the multivariate odds ratio for SIDS in infants sleeping alone ranged from threefold to tenfold compared to those who slept in the same room as their parent or caregiver¹⁻⁵.

Though the majority of SIDS deaths occur during night-time sleep, these deaths can also occur at any time of the day. In the prospective CESDI SUDI study of SIDS infants case matched with well controls, time of death was explored, as well as other circumstances around their death. The length of time from when SIDS infants were last observed alive until the discovery of their death was not significantly different from the length of sleep of their case-matched controls. More than a third of the infants who died during the daytime were observed alive within the preceding 30 minutes. This study also showed that there was a significant, five-fold risk to unsupervised day-time sleep, as well as for night-time sleep². This research highlights the importance of an infant sleeping in the same room as their caregiver, so they can respond quickly to any difficulty the infant may have.

References

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3. Carpenter, R. G. *et al.* Sudden unexplained infant death in 20 regions in Europe: case control study. *The Lancet* **363**, 185–191 (2004).
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Frequently asked questions

What does the research on room sharing show?

Several studies, from the UK and New Zealand, found that a baby who sleeps in a separate room are at significantly higher risk of SIDS. This includes for daytime sleep as well as overnight.

What is room sharing for babies?

Room sharing means your baby sleeps in the same room as you, day and night, but in their own sleep space—like a cot or Moses basket. By being close, it is easier for you to feed, comfort, and keep an eye on them.

What should I do if I can't fit a cot in my room and my baby has outgrown their Moses basket?

Smaller options for cots, such as travel cots, are available, and your baby can safely sleep in one even whilst at home. These provide a firm, flat surface which can be cleared and kept clean. Because of the increased risk of SIDS in young infants, it is important that your baby sleeps in the same room as you for the first 6 months

Do I have to stay in the same room as my baby for day sleeps, even in the early evening?

Yes. Your baby should sleep at any time, in the day, evening and overnight, in the same room as you. There is an increased risk of SIDS even with daytime sleep if they are unsupervised. This doesn't mean you can't leave the room to make a cup of tea or go to the toilet, but they're safest if you're close by most of the time. It means you can keep an eye on them and attend to them if they need anything.

What is the key takeaway for families?

Babies should always be in the same room as you for the first six months for sleep, day and night. The risk of SIDS is lower when you have your baby sleep in the same room as you, compared to having them sleep alone.

