

Bed sharing

Some parents choose to share a bed or other sleep surface (also known as co-sleeping) with their babies.

Babies should be slept in a clear sleep space, which is easy to create in a cot or Moses basket. We know many parents will intentionally or accidentally co-sleep with their baby at some point. We have advice on when you shouldn't do this, and steps you can take to make your co-sleeping space safer for baby.

You must be especially careful that you are not in a position where you and your baby could both fall asleep in an armchair or on the sofa together. The risk is not just for accidents or suffocation, but for SIDS deaths as well. This is one of the most high risk sleep situations for your baby.

For safer co-sleeping:

- Keep pillows, sheets, blankets away from your baby or any other items that could obstruct your baby's breathing or cause them to overheat. A high proportion of infants who die as a result of SIDS are found with their head covered by loose bedding
- Follow all of our other safer sleep advice to reduce the risk of SIDS such as sleeping baby on their back
- Avoid letting pets or other children in the bed
- Make sure baby won't fall out of bed or get trapped between the mattress and the wall

When not to bed share

It is important for you to know that there are some circumstances in which co-sleeping with your baby can be very dangerous:

- Either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom)
- Either you or your partner has drunk any alcohol or taken drugs (including any medication that may make you drowsy)
- Your baby was born premature (born before 37 weeks)
- Your baby was born a low weight (less than 2.5 kg or 5 ½ lbs)
- Never sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby, this can increase the risk of SIDS by 50 times
- You should never sleep together with your baby if any of the above points apply to you or your partner



You might also be interested in reading the two Unicef Baby Friendly publications, which are both endorsed by The Lullaby Trust:

- [Unicef's leaflet on Caring for Your Baby at Night](#)
- [Unicef's guide Co-sleeping and SIDS: A Guide for Health Professionals](#)

Frequently asked questions



I am worried I might fall asleep in bed while I breastfeed my baby at night, is this ok?

Breastfeeding reduces the chance of SIDS, so we would always try and help you work out a way to continue breastfeeding in the safest way possible. If you feel you might fall asleep we would recommend you prepare the bed as described above so it is safer for baby if this happens. Make sure you know the advice on when never to bed share so you know when to take particular care. It is really important that you do not accidentally fall asleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair. If you think you might fall asleep on a sofa or armchair, put the baby down in a safe place to sleep

Should I co-sleep with my baby?

It is very much a personal choice so we would just advise you to read all the information on safer co-sleeping so you can make an informed decision. That way even if you decide not to co-sleep you can make your bed a safer place for your baby if you doze off accidentally.

There are some circumstances where we would strongly recommend against co-sleeping such as on a sofa or armchair, if anyone in the bed smokes or has drunk alcohol or the baby was premature or a low birth weight.

Is it safer to co-sleep using a nest or pod than with a baby just lying on the adult bed?

No. We do not recommend that babies sleep on soft surfaces such as pods or nests. If you choose to co-sleep with your baby the safest place is a clear space on a firm flat mattress the same as we would advise with a cot.

What bedding should I use for my baby when we co-sleep?

To avoid loose bedding a sleeping bag would be advisable. You can choose different togs for different seasons to help keep your baby at the right temperature. You can also select different sizes depending on the age of your baby. It is important that the sleeping bag fits well around the shoulders so that your baby's head does not slip down into the bag.



Research corner

It is important that all parents know how to bedshare more safely, as bedsharing can be planned or unintentional. Whilst the guidance has shown ways to bedshare as safely as possible, research has shown that there are instances where sharing a sleep surface with a baby carries an increased chance of SIDS occurring and should be avoided. It is not recommended to bedshare if parents or carers smoke, even if they do not smoke in the bedroom, have consumed/drunk any alcohol or have taken any drugs or medication that can have a drowsy effect. Research has also shown that babies that were born premature or at low birthweight are also at increased chance of SIDS when bedsharing. It is very important never to sleep with a baby on a sofa or armchair as this is associated with a 50x increased chance of SIDS. Statistically, sharing a room with baby in a separate cot or Moses basket for baby is associated with the lowest chance of SIDS occurring, but if you do bedshare, make sure you follow the guidance to make it as safe as possible for your baby.