

# Product Guide

a guide to buying  
safer sleep essentials



Public Health  
England

# Guidance on baby products

Choosing what items your baby might need can be overwhelming. To help with this we have put together a guide on how to choose the products or items your baby needs to reduce the chance of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

**Things don't have to be complicated!**

## A quick reference guide

A few essentials that you need:

Cot or Moses basket

Portable sleep space

Mattress

Sleeping bag or sheets and a blanket

Room thermometer

Car seat



## Things to check

Does the item comply with British Standards?

If so it should say on the product itself, its packaging, instructions or website.

If the item is something for your baby to sleep on such as a mattress is it:

- firm? (baby's head should not sink in by more than a few millimetres)
- entirely flat with no raised or cushioned areas?
- does it have a waterproof cover?

## Items we would not recommend:

- Pods/nests
- Pillows/duvets/thick heavy bedding
- Cot bumpers
- Hammocks
- Sleep positioners

# Product claims and what to look for

Many products make claims about the benefits to your baby, and it can be hard to sort the science from the marketing. We can help you with what to look for and what to ignore.

## What to look for

We strongly advise that any product you choose complies with British Standards, especially if you are buying an item over the internet. A British Standard tells us that the product has passed certain tests, such as making sure it will not fall apart or set on fire easily, but does not mean that it will be safe when it comes to reducing the risk of SIDS. If a product complies

with a standard it should be stated on the product, its packaging or website.

We also advise that you carefully follow the instructions that come with any product you buy. If you buy a second-hand product, it is very important that you get hold of a copy of the instructions from the manufacturer. When a manufacturer creates a sleeping product they mean for it to be used in a certain way. Using an item in a way the manufacturer did not intend could put your baby at risk.

Bear in mind that just because a product is made by a name you know or sold on the high street does not mean it is safe for your baby to sleep in or on.



# Claims you can ignore

## 1 Anything that claims to help baby sleep longer/more deeply

For tired parents, any product claiming to help your baby sleep for longer might sound like a good idea. However, it is normal for babies under one (or sometimes even older) to wake during the night, particularly if they are breastfed.

Encouraging babies to sleep for longer and more deeply than is normal for their stage of development may affect their ability to wake up if something is wrong, such as if their mouth and nose become covered. This inability to wake easily from sleep is thought to be linked to SIDS.

## 2 'Breathability'/Temperature regulation

If a baby gets too hot this can put them at a higher risk of SIDS. The best way to make sure that your baby does not get too hot is to sleep them on a firm, flat surface, on their back, with bedding and clothing that is suitable for the room temperature. If you follow this guidance the breathability and temperature regulation of a sleep surface does not need to be a consideration.

Rather than being breathable, it is more important that a mattress is waterproof or has a waterproof cover. A waterproof cover helps to stop bacteria building up inside the mattress so there is less risk of infection, which may increase the risk of SIDS.



### 3 'Safe/safer'(for baby)

There are no standards that look specifically at whether a product decreases or increases the risk of SIDS; most cover other issues such as the construction of the item, chemicals or fire safety.

To reduce the risk of SIDS, pick products that allow you to follow safer sleep advice such as sleeping bags, which stop babies from wriggling under covers.

**When checking a product is safe for baby to sleep on, remember the simple rule: firm, flat and waterproof.**

### 4 'Reduces the risk of flat-head syndrome' (plagiocephaly)

A baby's head is soft and can naturally become flattened, which can worry some parents. A product should not be needed to prevent or reduce this, but if you are worried you should speak to your doctor or health visitor. If a product is soft enough to reduce flat-head syndrome it is soft enough to cause a baby to overheat, which increases the chance of SIDS. Anything soft in a cot can also increase the risk of suffocation.

Allowing your baby plenty of supervised tummy time when awake is a way you can help to avoid or lessen the effect of flat-head syndrome, without increasing the risk of SIDS.

### 5 'Reduces risk of SIDS'/'Reduces environmental factors associated with SIDS'

Claims that a product will decrease the risk of SIDS are almost always not true. It depends on what the product is being compared to. We would advise parents to be cautious about any product that says it will reduce the risk of SIDS. However, any product that conforms to safer sleep advice (such as the recommended items on pages 6-8) will be less risky than one that does not.

**For safer sleep you don't need to buy lots of products or spend more on expensive items.**



**There are just a few essentials you need:**



### **Cot/Moses basket and mattress**

It is important that the mattress is firm, entirely flat, and waterproof, with no soft or cushioned areas, particularly around baby's head.

Soft mattresses are known to increase the risk of SIDS. They make it harder for babies to lose body heat, which can cause them to become too hot.

The surface of the mattress should be firm enough that when your baby is placed on it, their head does not sink in more than a few millimetres.

#### **Three key questions you could ask are:**

- 1. Is it firm?**
- 2. Is it flat?**
- 3. Does it have a waterproof cover?**

If you choose a second hand mattress make sure it has been stored somewhere clean, dry and smoke-free.



## Portable sleep space (Moses basket/ travel cot/ carry cot)

We advise that your baby is in the same room as you when they sleep – day and night. If you choose a Moses basket or travel cot follow the mattress advice opposite, and don't add extra padding.

## Sleeping bag or sheets and a blanket

Baby sleeping bags are a good option as they prevent your baby's head from being covered by wriggling under bedding. 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. Extra bedding should not be needed.

Blankets are fine as an alternative as long as they aren't too thick or doubled over, so there is no chance of overheating. If using blankets, make sure they are firmly tucked in and come up no higher than the shoulders. Sleep your baby in the 'feet-to-foot' position (baby's feet against the foot of the cot) to avoid their face becoming covered by loose bedding.





## Room thermometer

Any room a baby sleeps in should be between 16°C and 20°C. A room thermometer can help to avoid your baby getting too hot or cold.



## Pram

Babies are safest sleeping flat and on their backs. Like all places where your baby may go to sleep, make sure the mattress is firm, flat and waterproof.

## Car seat

Car seats are essential for safety when travelling, but babies should not sleep in a car seat for long periods as many aren't flat, which can mean babies are slumped over.

On longer journeys give your baby regular breaks and if possible have an adult sit with the baby in the back of the car, or use a mirror so you are able to keep an eye on them.





# Products that we would not advise you to buy:

## Pods/nests

Pods or nests are a softer type of sleep surface sometimes used instead of or in addition to a mattress, with areas that are raised or cushioned. When sleeping, babies shouldn't lie on or have anything soft around them, particularly their heads, as this can cause them to overheat and increases the risk of SIDS.

Soft, squishy materials can also cover baby's mouth and nose if they are pressed against it.

It is also important to remember that while there is a British Standard for cot mattresses, there is no standard for pods or nests as a sleeping place for babies.



## Pillows/duvets/ thick heavy bedding

Duvets, cot quilts and pillows have been shown to increase the risk of SIDS and are not recommended for babies under 12 months.

## Cot bumpers

Cot bumpers pose a serious risk to babies. Accidents have been caused by babies becoming entangled in the ties or material. Your baby's cot should be kept clear to be as safe as possible.

If the cot meets the British Standard in terms of shape, build, and spacing of the bars, this helps to lower the risk of a baby injuring themselves on the cot sides.



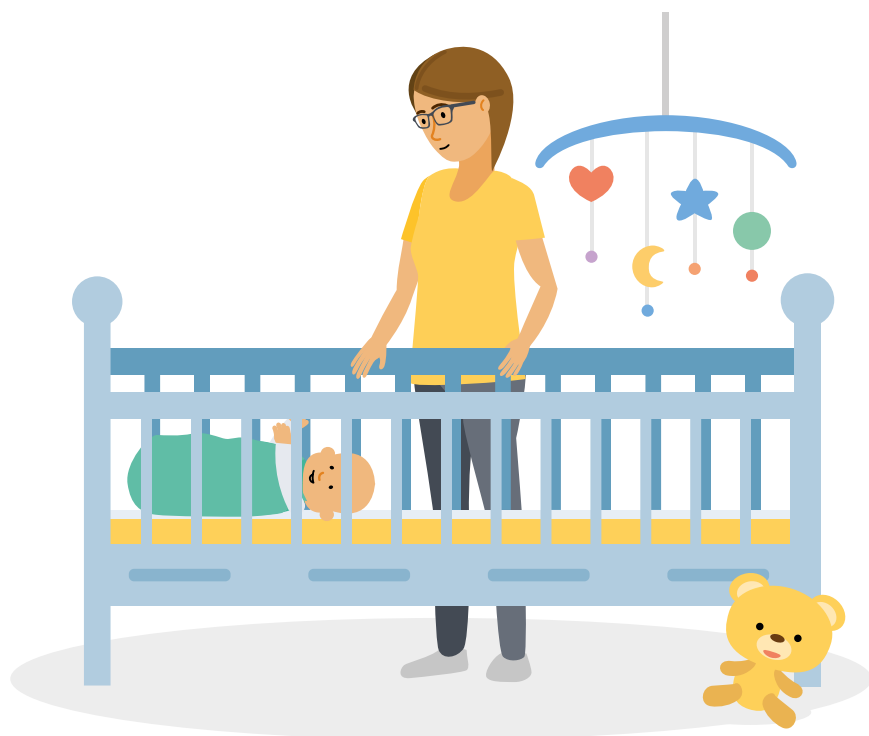
## Hammocks

Hammocks are not a firm flat surface for babies to sleep on, which we know is safest for babies because it reduces the risk of SIDS.

## Sleep positioners

Babies should not be slept on any surface that straps or holds them in one position, whether that is on their back, front or side.

Some products are sold that claim to help babies relax by holding them in position on their tummy. However, it is very risky if babies fall asleep on their tummies, so we strongly recommend you do not use any item that does this.



You can sign up for NHS-approved advice on pregnancy, birth and beyond delivered direct to your phone by visiting [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life) or speak to your health visitor, practice nurse or midwife.

*The Lullaby Trust receives financial support from a small number of baby product manufacturers. Our relationships with them do not in any way influence our safer sleep advice, which is informed by scientific research. Funding from companies helps us to provide free safer sleep advice and support bereaved parents. We only associate with companies that support our safer sleep message and produce products that we consider to be safe. The images in this booklet are of products produced by our sponsors. Information on our corporate supporters can be found here [www.lullabytrust.org.uk/support-us/corporate-fundraising/meet-our-corporate-partners/](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/support-us/corporate-fundraising/meet-our-corporate-partners/)*

*To read the research and evidence behind this guide go to [www.lullabytrust.org.uk/research/evidence-base](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/research/evidence-base)*

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**Keep it simple,  
Keep it safe.**

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