

Safe Sleep for Infants - Birth to 1 Year Old - in Shelter Settings or Temporary Housing



Sleep-related causes, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed, claim hundreds of infant lives yearly. Safe sleep practices are important for babies under 1 year old, especially in emergency shelters or temporary housing. These guidelines are specific to infants, not older children.



Babies should sleep **alone** in their own sleep space, close to but separate from their caregiver.



Babies should be placed on their **back** to sleep. Every sleep. Every nap. Every time.



Babies should sleep in a **crib** or **cot** with a firm, flat surface with no extra blankets or toys.

Examples of Infant Safe Sleep



Sleep proximity

Caregivers should sleep near, not with, their infant. Place the infant's separate sleep space close to the caregiver's sleep area. This allows easy monitoring while reducing suffocation risks.



Wearable blankets

Instead of loose or weighted blankets that can cover the baby's face and obstruct breathing, use a wearable blanket or sleep sack to keep the baby warm without the risks.



Baby on back

Always place the baby on their back to sleep, never on their stomach or side, as back sleeping greatly reduces the risk of SIDS.



Firm sleep surface

Use a firm, flat sleep surface covered only by a fitted sheet. Cribs, portable play yards/playpens, and bassinets that meet safety standards are best.



No blankets or pillows in bed

Keep loose bedding and pillows out of the baby's sleep space. These can significantly increase suffocation and strangulation hazards.



No toys in bed

Soft toys and stuffed animals can pose suffocation risks for infants. Keep the baby's sleep area clear of any loose items.

Advice for Infant Safe Sleep in Shelters and On-The-Go

1 **Pack smart and use proper equipment:** Bring a portable crib or play yard/playpen if possible. If unavailable, ask shelter staff for help or use safe temporary alternatives like a sturdy box with firm padding and tight-fitting sheet.

2 **Maintain safe sleep practices in all environments:** Always place the baby alone on their back to sleep, even for short naps. Keep the sleep area clear of hazards and stay vigilant in temporary settings.

3 **Avoid unsafe sleep surfaces and situations:** Never share beds or use unsafe surfaces like air mattresses, waterbeds, sofas, futons, car seats, or swings for infant sleep. After feeding, return the baby to their separate sleep space.

4 **Remember the ABCs and seek help if needed:** ***Alone*** on their ***Back*** in a bare ***Crib*** or ***Cot*** for every sleep. If unsure, ask shelter staff or contact local health services for guidance.



Goals for Infant Safe Sleep



Is the baby sleeping on their back?



Is the baby in an approved crib, cot, or bassinet?



Does the baby have their own separate sleep space?



No blankets, toys, stuffed animals, or objects in the sleep space?

Resources

For more information on safe sleep education and resources, please visit:

- **Chicago Department of Public Health**
 - <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/onechifam/home/infant-care/baby-basics/infant-sleep-safety.html>
- **Illinois Department of Human Services**
 - <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=146357>
- **Healthy Children** (website recommended by pediatricians)
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/A-Parents-Guide-to-Safe-Sleep.aspx>
- **Charlie's Kids** (videos on safe sleep)
 - <https://charlieskids.org/our-videos/> (English)
 - <https://charlieskids.org/our-videos/spanish/> (Spanish)
- **Family Connects Chicago** (provides safe sleep training to staff and residents of shelters)
 - Email: fcc@cityofchicago.org
- **Illinois Department of Human Services Helpline**
 - Phone: 1-800-843-6154

