

sleep safely

sleep
tight

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why this leaflet?

Unexpected death can occur in young infants between the ages of 0 and 2. They die in their sleep, whereas they have no known health issues. This type of death is called cot death or SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). The causes of cot death have been widely researched. Results show that the risk of cot death is reduced if your baby:

- sleeps on its back
- is not too warm
- sleeps in a snug baby sleeping bag or under a light blanket
- is not exposed to cigarette or cigar smoke

In this leaflet, you will find advice on safe sleeping habits for your baby. This advice is important and should not be underestimated. Thanks to these recommendations, cot deaths in the Netherlands have dropped from 190 per year around 1985, to currently fewer than 20 per year.

This leaflet teaches you what things to watch for regarding:

- your baby's sleeping position
- the crib or cot
- the temperature in the nursery
- baby care

Have you done everything you can to minimize the risk of cot death? Use the checklist on the back of this leaflet.

→ sleeping position

From Day 1, put your baby to sleep on its back. On its back, your baby's face is free and cannot get smothered. This is the safest position for your baby to breathe freely.

Why is it so dangerous for my baby to sleep on its tummy?

Lying on its tummy, your baby's mouth and nose can get buried in the mattress, making it difficult for your baby to breathe.

When can my baby lie on its tummy?

When your baby is awake, lying on its tummy is good for its development. Your child will learn to turn its head, to move around and later on, to roll over. Never leave your baby alone when it is lying on its tummy. Once your baby is able to easily roll over from its tummy to its back and from its back to its tummy, it will be ready to sleep on its tummy.

Will my baby develop a flat head if it sleeps on its back?

No, not if you change the position of your baby's head every day. Turn your baby's head to face a different side each time you put it to sleep. Put your baby in the crib or cot facing left one day, and facing right the next. This will prevent your baby's head from becoming flat.

→ the bed

Put your baby in a crib or cot

Your baby is safest sleeping in a crib or cot. During the first six months, place the crib or cot as close as possible to your own bed. Whatever you do, do not allow your baby to fall asleep in bed with you during the first four months. This is dangerous. Your baby can get too hot from your body heat or the

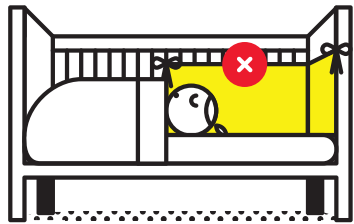


duvet. Your baby can get stuck between the mattresses or under your duvet. It can also fall out of bed. Or you may accidentally roll over onto your baby in your sleep. So, for the first four months, always put your baby to sleep in its own crib or cot.

Make sure the crib or cot is safe

The crib or cot must be open, so as to allow the passage of air. For this reason, most cribs and cots have vertical bars. The bars should be spaced between 4.5 and 6.5 cm apart. If the distance between the bars is larger, your baby may get its head or bottom stuck between the bars. Choose a firm mattress. It should not sag in the middle, nor should it have any lumps or bumps. Make sure the mattress fits securely in the crib or cot, so that there are no large gaps.

Do not use pillows, baby nests, cushioned sleeping pods or cot bumpers. Do not place any stuffed animals made of soft fabric or plastic in your baby's cot. Avoid using plastic sheets if you can. If you do want to use plastic sheets, avoid placing them



under your baby's head. All these things can make it difficult for your baby to breathe. Is there a canopy over the bed? Remove it once your child becomes more active.

Place the crib or cot in a safe spot

Make sure that both the crib or cot and the spot where you place it are safe. Do not place the crib or cot near window blind or curtain cords. Is there a mobile in the nursery? Hang it as high as possible so that your baby cannot reach it. A mobile is something to look at, not to play with.

Use a baby sleeping bag

Has your baby become more active? Is it starting to move? Switch to a snug fitted

baby sleeping bag. Until your child is two years old, this is the safest way to keep it warm. Your baby's head cannot slip under it, ensuring that it can breathe freely and will not get too hot. Nor will it get too cold, as it is always covered.

What to look for when buying a baby sleeping bag?

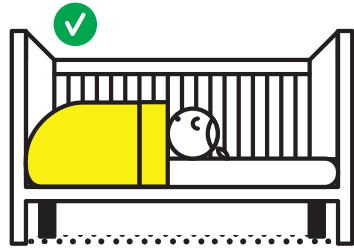
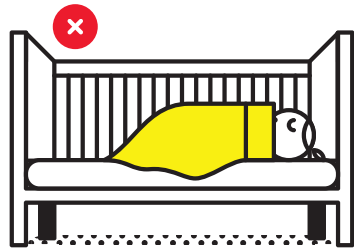
Make sure it fits snugly. The sleeping bag should not be too big or too small, as this can be dangerous. A sleeping bag is too big if the armholes and neck opening are too large. Your baby can then slide down into the sleeping bag. A sleeping bag is too small if your baby cannot stretch its legs completely in the sleeping bag or if the armholes and neck opening are too tight. If you have a thin sleeping bag, you can cover it with a light blanket or sheet, which you tuck in under the mattress. That way, your baby will not be able to roll over onto its tummy as easily.

Do not use a duvet

Do not use a duvet for the first two years. A duvet can be far too warm. Also, your baby may get its head under the duvet. This is dangerous as your baby will not be able to breathe.

A baby sleeping bag is the safest solution. If you don't have one, use a sheet and a blanket. You can put the blanket in a duvet cover. Make sure the blanket fits in the cover and is not folded. The duvet cover must be long enough, so you can tuck it in at least 10 cm under the mattress. Make sure the cover is closed, so that your child cannot get inside it.

Are you using a blanket with a sheet or a blanket inside a duvet cover? Tuck it in tightly at the end of the mattress, making sure your baby's feet are at the foot of



the bed ("feet to foot" position) and that the blanket is tucked in no higher than your baby's shoulders. That way, your baby cannot slip down under the blanket. Tuck the sheet or blanket in securely on the sides and at the foot end of the mattress.

Never strap your child down in bed

Some parents are afraid that their baby will roll onto its tummy or climb out of the cot, so they secure their child in the bed using a belt or a strap. This is dangerous. Your baby can roll over and get stuck, making it difficult or impossible to breathe. So never strap down your baby in bed. Also, never use support pillows. Are you afraid that your baby will roll over onto its tummy? Use a baby sleeping bag.

Is your child a little older and are you afraid that it will climb out of bed and fall down? Remove one of the sides (or the bars) from the bed, so that it can get out of bed on its own without falling. You may also want to replace the cot by a larger bed, without bars.

→ temperature in the nursery

Make sure your baby is not too warm

Dress your baby so that it is not too warm, nor too cold. A hat is no longer needed after the first week. You can check whether your child is too warm or too cold by feeling its neck. It should feel warm. The ideal temperature for a nursery is between 16°C and 18°C. Does your baby have a fever? Dress it in cooler clothing.

Do not expose your baby to cigarette smoke

Smoke from a cigarette, cigar, pipe or incense is very harmful to children. A smoky environment is bad for a young child, and can have life-long negative health effects. Do not smoke near your child and stay away from places where smoking is permitted.

Good ventilation

Fresh air is important. Open the windows in the nursery frequently. If you can see condensation on the inside of your windows, this means you are not ventilating enough.

→ care

Do not give your baby medication that will make it sleepy

Always be careful with medication. Never give your baby medication that causes it to sleep or become drowsy. This includes cough syrup. Are you unsure whether you can give your baby a specific medicine? Call a doctor.

Rest and daily routine

Young children need rest and a daily routine. Make sure your baby sleeps and eats at approximately the same time every day. Avoid over-stimulation and stress. Over-stimulation and stress interfere with your baby's sleep. Restful sleep is very important for young children.

Breastfeed and use a soother

It is advisable to breastfeed your baby, if you can. Breastfeeding lowers the risk of cot death. You may wish to give your child a soother to fall asleep. This also lowers the risk of cot death, provided you do it all the time. Are you breastfeeding? Make sure your child is nursing properly before you give it a soother. Are you bottle-feeding your baby? In that case, you can start using a soother right away.



checklist → safe sleeping habits

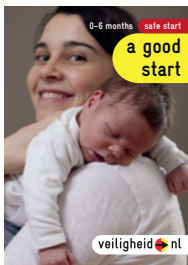
- I always put my baby to sleep on its back.
- My baby sleeps in a sleeping bag or under a sheet and blanket.
- My child always sleeps in its own crib or cot.
- Is the crib or cot made up in "feet to foot" position?
(Baby's feet at the foot of the bed?)
- There is no pillow or cot bumper in the crib or cot.
- The distance between the crib or cot bars is between 4.5 and 6.5 cm.
- My baby lies on a firm mattress in its crib or cot.
- The mattress fits snugly in the crib or cot.
- I never strap my baby down in bed.
- I check regularly whether my child is not too hot or too cold.
- My baby is not exposed to smoke.
- I air the nursery regularly.
- I never give my baby medication that causes it to sleep or become drowsy.

Did you tick all of the boxes?

Then your baby is sleeping safely. Couldn't tick some of the boxes? Make the necessary changes right away. Read through our recommendations again so you know exactly what to do and ensure that your baby sleeps safely.

further information?

Do you want to learn more about how your baby can sleep safely? Have a look at www.veiligheid.nl/veiligslapen.



This leaflet is part of the series on Growing Up Safely.

The other 3 leaflets in this series, obtainable at your local Child Health Care Centre (Consultatiebureau) are:

- Good Start (0-6 months)
- Playful Exploring (6-12 months)
- Fun on the Go (1-4 years)

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The information in this leaflet has been prepared with utmost care. VeiligheidNL assumes no liability for any inaccuracies.

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