

Study: Parents not following safe sleep advice for infants

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Many infants are sleeping in unsafe positions and locations, especially if they are moved in the middle of the night, according to a new study.

Researchers found parents are shirking safe sleep practices for babies even when being video recorded.

“Although safe sleep messages have been emphasized for years, our data suggest that parents are not strictly adhering to the guidance on safe sleep environments,” authors said in the study “Nocturnal Video Assessment of Infant Sleep Environments” (Batra EK, et al. *Pediatrics*. Aug. 15, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-1533>).



There are about [3,500 sudden unexpected infant deaths](#) in the U.S. annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2014, 69% of those were caused by [sudden infant death syndrome](#) or accidental suffocation/strangulation in bed, and the rest had an unknown cause.

To protect children from sleep-related deaths, the Academy recommends infants sleep on their backs, also known as the supine position. Their sleep environment should be a firm crib mattress free of loose bedding and soft objects, and they should not share a bed with anyone.

To take a look at how well parents follow these recommendations and to avoid bias from self-reporting, researchers from Penn State University monitored infants in their homes via video recordings for one night at 1, 3 and 6 months of age.

They found that 10%-21% of infants in each group initially were put to sleep on a non-recommended surface, 14%-33% were non-supine and 87%-93% had loose/unapproved items nearby.

The situation often worsened for those who were moved in the middle of the night. Among those children, 36%-78% were placed in a non-supine position at the second location up from 13%-50% initially. Roughly 67%-81% shared a sleep surface in the second location up from to 4%-17% initially.

Unsafe sleep practices may be attributable in part to parents seeing decorative bedding in stores and assuming it is safe, researchers said. Parents also may be focused on placing infants in locations and positions where they think they will be most comfortable and sleep the longest.

“Health care providers should be aware of these influences on parental decision-making so that appropriate guidance can be given,” authors wrote, adding they also should discuss the entire night’s sleep, not just

initial bedtime habits.

Resources

- [AAP policy "SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment"](#)
- [Information for parents on safe sleep](#)

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