



[Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(NICHD\)](#)

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**NIH expands safe infant sleep outreach effort**

*'Safe to sleep' seeks to reduce risk of sleep-related infant death*

The U.S. national campaign to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome has entered a new phase and will now encompass all sleep-related, sudden unexpected infant deaths, officials of the National Institutes of Health announced today.

The campaign, which has been known as the Back to Sleep Campaign, has been renamed the Safe to Sleep Campaign.

The NIH-led Back to Sleep Campaign began in 1994, to educate parents, caregivers, and health care providers about ways to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The campaign name was derived from the recommendation to place healthy infants on their backs to sleep, a practice proven to reduce SIDS risk. SIDS is the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age that cannot be explained, even after a complete death scene investigation, autopsy, and review of the infant's health history. Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) includes all unexpected infant deaths: those due to SIDS, and as well as those from other causes.

Many SUID cases are due to such causes as accidental suffocation and entrapment, such as when an infant gets trapped between a mattress and a wall, or when bedding material presses on or wraps around an infant's neck. In addition to stressing the placement of infants on their backs for all sleep times, the Safe to Sleep Campaign emphasizes other ways to provide a safe sleep environment for infants. This includes placing infants to sleep in their own safe sleep environment and not on an adult bed, without any soft bedding such as blankets or quilts. Safe to Sleep also emphasizes breast feeding infants when possible, which has been associated with reduced SIDS risk, and eliminating such risks to infant health as overheating, exposure to tobacco smoke, and a mother's use of alcohol and illicit drugs.

"In recent years, we've learned that many of the risk factors for SIDS are similar to those for other sleep-related causes of infant death," said Alan E. Guttmacher, M.D., Director of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the NIH institute which sponsors Safe to Sleep. "Placing infants on their backs to sleep and providing them with a safe sleep

environment for every sleep time reduces the risk for SIDS as well as death from other causes, such as suffocation.”

A new one-page fact sheet, “What does a safe sleep environment look like,” shows how to provide a safe sleep environment, and lists ways that parents and caregivers can reduce the risk for SIDS. The fact sheet is available at [http://nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs\\_details.cfm?from=&pubs\\_id=5795](http://nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs_details.cfm?from=&pubs_id=5795).

The NICHD’s new brochure, Safe Sleep for Your Baby, provides more detailed information on ways that parents and caregivers can reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. The Safe Sleep for Your Baby brochure, as well as the one-page fact sheet, are available for order at 1-800-505-CRIB (2742) or at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS>.

In the next month, new Safe to Sleep materials will be available in Spanish. Additional materials will be available for the African-American and American Indian/Alaska Native communities, which have had higher SIDS rates. Also, a Safe Sleep for Your Baby DVD will be available for order and the new Safe to Sleep campaign website will be launched in October.

Since the 1970s, the NICHD has conducted and supported research to understand SIDS and identify ways to reduce its occurrence. The original Back to Sleep Campaign was based on the American Academy of Pediatrics’ (AAP) original recommendation for back sleeping. The new Safe to Sleep Campaign seeks to inform parents and caregivers of the AAP’s [revised recommendations](#) for reducing SIDS as well as other sleep-related causes of infant death.

The NICHD also has enlisted the aid of spokespersons around the country for its Safe to Sleep Champions Initiative. Safe to Sleep Champions include infant and family health advocates, community leaders, and pediatricians. They will work with media in their areas to draw attention to the problem of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. NICHD Safe to Sleep Champions will target outreach in areas with higher rates of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, and Wyoming.

The original co-sponsors of the Back to Sleep Campaign, AAP, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), First Candle, and the Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs (ASIP) are the NICHD’s collaborators on the Safe to Sleep Campaign. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Reproductive Health and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) have joined as collaborators to support the campaign’s efforts.

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**About the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD):** The NICHD sponsors research on development, before and after birth; maternal, child, and family health; reproductive biology and population issues; and medical rehabilitation. For more information, visit the Institute’s website at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>.

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